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The Guardian

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Six children among 12 dead after boat 'ripped open' in the Channel

Calls for legal routes to halt 'shockingly high' death rates on crossings

Rajeev Syal
Diane Taylor
Angelique Chrisafis
Boulogne-sur-Mer

Six children and a pregnant woman were among at least 12 people who died after a boat carrying dozens of asylum seekers to the UK was "ripped open" in one of the worst Channel tragedies since the small boats crisis began.

In a major test for Keir Starmer's government, which is facing demands from charities to open up safe routes to the UK, the French authorities said 10 of those who had lost their lives were female, and many were believed to be from Eritrea.

The French interior minister, Gérald Darmanin, said more than 50 people had been rescued, including two in a critical condition from the "terrible shipwreck" off Cap Gris-Nez yesterday morning. Only eight of the 70 passengers were wearing life jackets, according to French officials.

The incident, in which everyone onboard was plunged into the sea, is believed to have caused the second highest number of deaths to befall asylum seekers trying to reach the UK since the small boats crisis began.

Following the latest deaths, the prime minister 4 →



▲ *Police and rescue workers in Boulogne-sur-Mer, northern France, with the bodies of people retrieved from the Channel* PHOTOGRAPH: DENIS CHARLET/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Letby 'advised to write notes to combat stress'

Exclusive
Felicity Lawrence

Scribbled notes used to help convict Lucy Letby of the murder of seven babies were written on the advice of professionals to deal with extreme stress, the Guardian has learned.

The notes were relied on as amounting to a confession by the prosecution during the neonatal nurse's first trial and on appeal, but sources close to the case said they were produced after counselling sessions as part of a therapeutic process in which she was advised to write down troubling thoughts.

Densely written on Post-it notes and a torn sheet of paper, the notes were overwritten in places and sometimes highlighted in capitals. They included the words: "I am evil I did this," "I killed them on purpose because I am not good enough to care for them and I am a horrible evil person," and "hate".

The prosecution used the notes to help build the case against Letby, ending the opening case outline by highlighting the phrase: "I am evil I did this." Throughout the trial, the jury was repeatedly reminded of that 2 →

Starmer faces test over winter fuel payments

Pippa Crerar
Political editor

Keir Starmer will face a test of his authority next week after promising a vote on the government's plans to limit the winter fuel allowance to the poorest pensioners.

MPs will get the chance to vote on secondary legislation on Tuesday that will introduce means-testing of the benefit, after pressure from opposition parties and concerned Labour backbenchers.

About half a dozen Labour MPs have publicly criticised the plan and demanded 12 →

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News



◀ *Police body camera footage shows Lucy Letby's arrest. She was found guilty of murdering seven babies*
PHOTOGRAPH: CHESHIRE CONSTABULARY/PA

Letby notes written as therapy do not amount to a confession, say experts

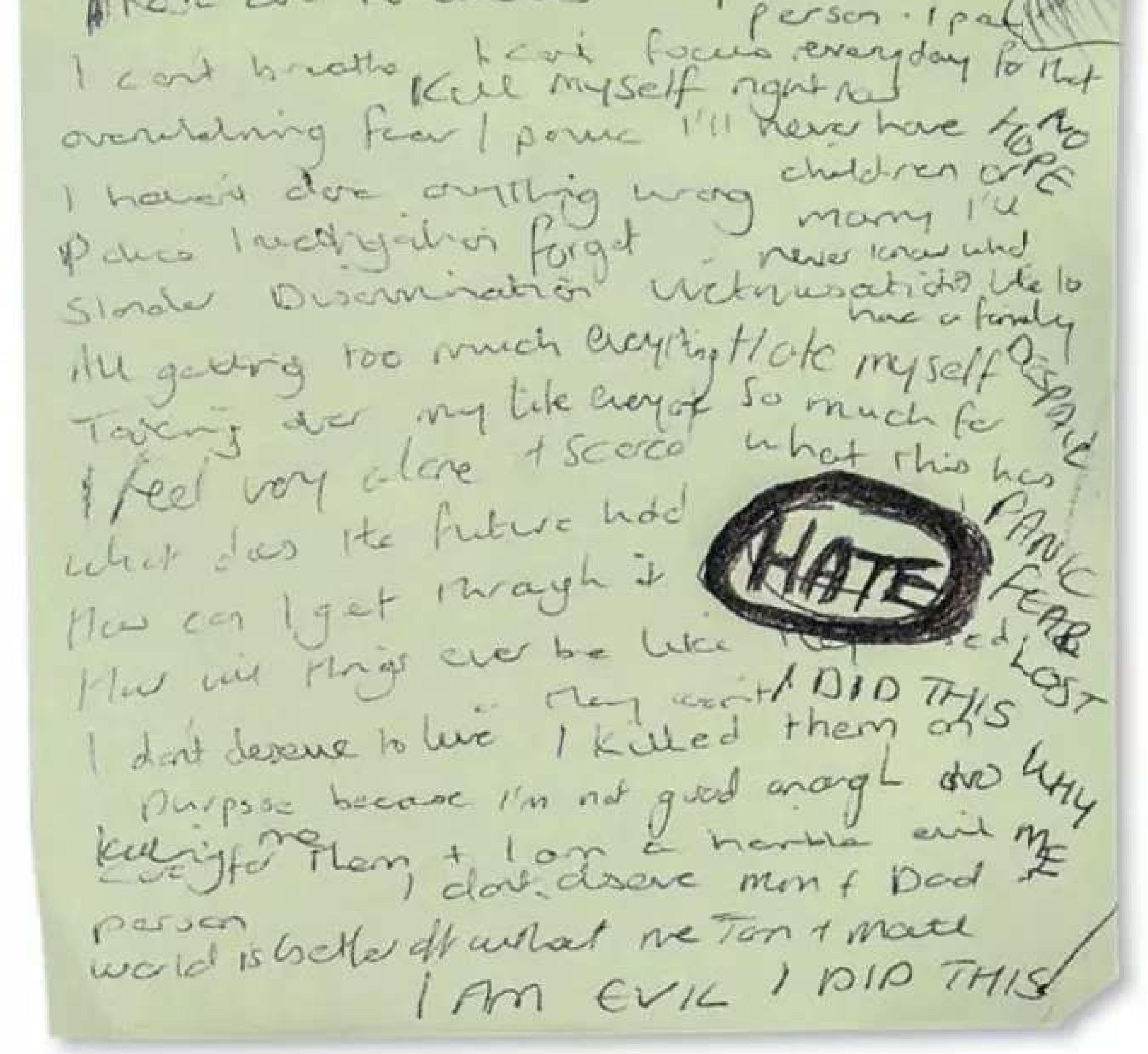
Continued *from page 1*

statement, and encouraged to interpret the notes literally.

But in the same notes, Letby also wrote "not good enough", "why me?" "I haven't done anything wrong" and "police investigation slander discrimination victimisation".

Now widely referred to in the media as the confession notes, they were written after some colleagues started suspecting her. They referenced her family and pets and colleagues at work, and described suicidal thoughts: "Kill myself right now", "help", "despair panic fear lost", "I feel very alone and scared".

There have been mounting questions in recent weeks over the safety of Letby's conviction, against the backdrop of a public inquiry that is set to begin receiving evidence next week. A group of leading experts have called on the government to postpone or change the terms of reference of the inquiry over these concerns, including questions about some of the evidence presented at the trial.



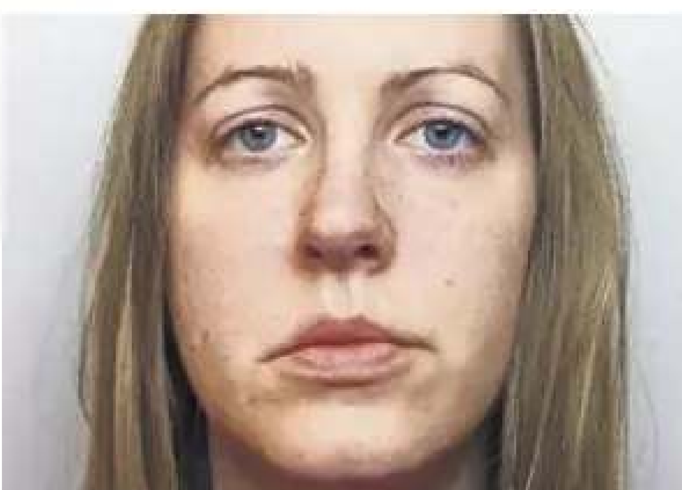
Sources close to the case have told the Guardian that the Countess of Chester hospital's head of occupational health and wellbeing, Kathryn de Beger, encouraged Letby to write down her feelings as a way of coping with extreme stress. Letby's Chester GP also advised her to write down thoughts she was struggling to process, according to these sources.

David Wilson, a professor of criminology at Birmingham City University, who specialises in serial killers, said in his view the so-called confession notes were "meaningless" and had no value as evidence, particularly if they had been written as part of counselling.

"Many people will say things when they are under stress and feeling bereft that seem to imply one thing but mean nothing at all, other than reflecting the underlying stress," Wilson said. "I always thought Letby's notes were meaningless as evidence. If they were written as part of therapy, you can underline that point three times and write it in bold and capital letters."

Letby was convicted last August of murdering seven babies and attempting to murder six others. In a retrial that ended in July she was convicted of attempting to murder a seventh baby. The notes did not feature in Letby's appeal application, which was rejected.

The prosecution's presentation of the notes was a key "gotcha moment", according to Wilson. From his experience of trials, such moments tended to set the narrative for the whole proceedings. He believed they could have been very influential on the jury, especially when other evidence was technical and hard to understand, he said. Such moments "catch the jury's attention and once you've caught it, it is really hard in our adversarial legal system to present alternatives successfully", he added.



▲ *Top, one of the notes Letby, above, wrote on the advice of a counsellor*

The notes were written at some point between July 2016, after she had been taken off the ward, and her arrest in July 2018. During this period she had been removed from her nursing duties after a cluster of deaths. She was told not to talk to most of her colleagues and so felt isolated and distressed, according to sources.

Nursing sources have said Letby was aware that senior consultants were talking openly about there being a serial killer on the unit and that gossip was pointing at her as someone who was on shift for many of the deaths.

Journalling, or writing down disturbing thoughts, is encouraged in general psychotherapy, according to Richard Curen, the chair of the Forensic Psychotherapy Society, who has worked as an expert witness and with victims and offenders for 25 years. "Doodling, journalling is a way of taking control of your thoughts. I don't think it relates to a confession of any kind," he said.

He added that Letby's response on the notes in court was "robust, and seems right - she wrote down how she was being made to feel".

"It's useful to put words on paper to short-circuit overthinking when there's a whirlpool of really confusing and disturbing thoughts going round and round in your head," he said. "Once they are externalised you can maybe put them to one side and carry on with what needs your attention."

De Beger gave Letby counselling over several sessions as part of support arranged by the hospital. Letby's notes refer repeatedly to De Beger and to "Bergerac", which appears to derive from the sound of her name.

The notes also mention her cats, Tigger and Smudge, her dog, Whiskey, and Tiny Boy, thought initially by investigators to be a reference to babies she killed but in fact her nickname for the small Yorkshire cross terrier dog, according to the sources close to the case.

Asked about the notes during her trial, Letby said she had always written things down to help understand her feelings, and that they were random thoughts. She said she was questioning herself and whether she had unintentionally done harm by not knowing enough or not being a good enough nurse, because of what was being said about her by doctors.

She denied in her first trial that the notes meant she killed or harmed babies. She said De Beger was "someone she was seeing" for support. The fact that writing the notes had been advised as part of counselling was not mentioned in court.

The defence argued during the trial that the notes represented Letby's anguished state of mind when she was accused of killing babies, and not guilt. "Anguish not guilt. A young woman who trained hard to be a nurse … who loved what she did, and found she was being blamed for the deaths of the babies she cared for," the defence counsel Ben Myers told the jury. But no expert forensic psychologists were called to give evidence on how to interpret the notes.

The Countess of Chester hospital said it could not comment while the inquiry and further investigations were ongoing.

Winton's 'Kinder' return to Prague as street named for man who saved Jewish children from Nazi camps





▲ Alexandra Greensted, and left, pictured as a child, before she was put on a train by her family at the age of seven to escape to England

Harriet Sherwood

At the age of seven, Alexandra Pfeifer was taken by her father and two brothers to Prague railway station, and told she was going on holiday.

"I didn't know where or why I was going. I didn't know there was a place called England. I waved to my brothers out of the window when the train left the station," she said.

This week, 92-year-old Alexandra Greensted - her married name - returned to Prague to honour the man who organised the rescue of hundreds of Jewish children, including her, from Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia in 1939 on the Kindertransport.

A new street in the Czech capital has been named after Nicholas Winton, who relentlessly cajoled and shamed immigration authorities to provide visas for 669 children, sparing them the horrors of the Holocaust.

Greensted's father and brothers were later murdered in Auschwitz.

Jan Čižinský, the mayor of the Prague district through which the street runs, spoke of Winton's "heroism, courage and humility". When complete, the street will pass by the railway station and memorials to "the dark side of world history".

The naming of the street coincides with the 85th anniversary of the last planned Kindertransport from Prague, which was prevented from departing due to the outbreak of the second world war. The 250 children onboard the train were deported to Nazi concentration camps; two survived the war.

Winton's heroic actions were depicted in a recent film, One Life, starring Anthony Hopkins. Winton, a former stockbroker, was knighted in 2003 and nominated for the Nobel peace prize in 2008. He died in 2015 at the age of 106. Among those attending the naming ceremony in Prague yesterday were four surviving "Winton children", as well as members of Winton's family and a delegation from the Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR). Michael Newman, the CEO of the AJR, said: "It is hugely symbolic that his endeavours are recognised and celebrated as well as to acknowledge the heroism of many others with whom he worked.

"In remembering Sir Nicholas, we also honour the parents who sent away their children to an uncertain future, as well as the foster families who gave sanctuary to the youngest victims of Nazi oppression. It is our fervent hope that the salvation of the Kindertransport will never again be needed."

Milena Grenfell-Baines, who was put on a Kindertransport at the age of nine with her three-year-old sister, said it was "deeply moving" to attend the naming ceremony.

She and other "Kinder" were "filled with pride to pay tribute to our saviour and a great sadness for those we had to leave behind".

Lady Grenfell-Baines, 94, said that she had no memory of the journey from Prague to Liverpool Street station in London on the last Kindertransport. "But I still have the label I wore, with the number 641 and my name," she said. She has been told by others that her sister was completely silent throughout the journey. "I must have looked after her, but I don't remember anything."

Winton's actions were unacknowledged until the television presenter Esther Rantzen brought together dozens of Kinder, plus their children and grandchildren, with Winton for an episode of That's Life in 1988.

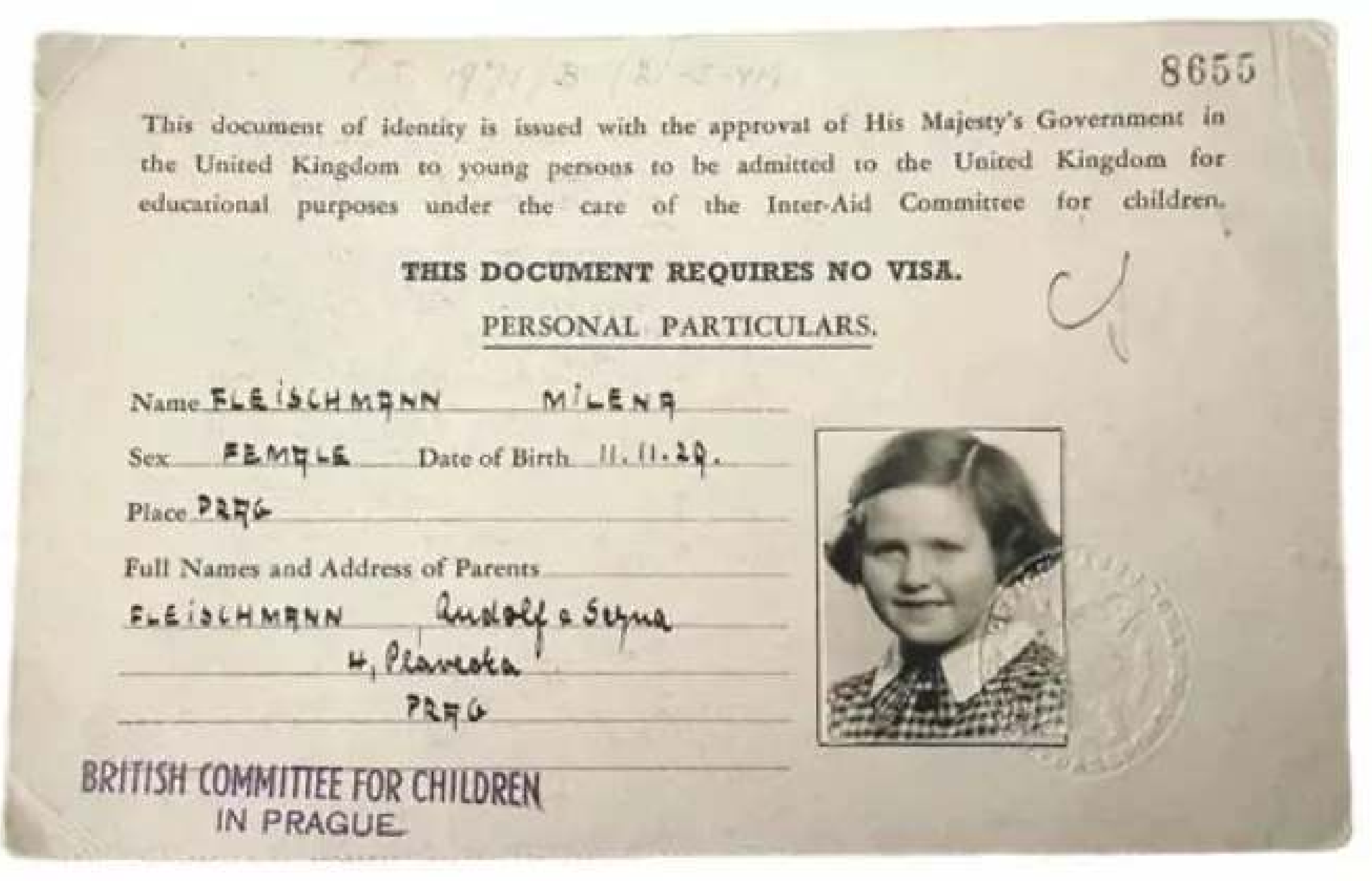
"If it wasn't for Esther Rantzen, none of this would be known," said Grenfell-Baines. She has proposed a bench dedicated to Rantzen, who has terminal cancer, be placed on the street. She added: "[Winton] had never really talked about it - he felt it was just a job done. There aren't many of us [Kinder] left, but he'll always be in our memories."

Greensted, whose mother died when she was a newborn, said she was "crying a lot" on arrival in London. She was met by a clergyman who escorted her to her new foster family.

The naming of the street after Winton was "wonderful" as he would "never be forgotten", Greensted said.

Last year, she applied to the country of her birth for citizenship, but was refused. She is now appealing.





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PERSONAL PARTICULARS.

Name FLEISCHMANN MILENA

Sex FEMALE Date of Birth 11.11.29.

Place PRAG

Full Names and Address of Parents

FLEISCHMANN Rudolf a Sejna

4, Plavecka

PRAG

BRITISH COMMITTEE FOR CHILDREN
IN PRAGUE



▲ Main, Nicholas Winton with one of the children he rescued. Right, Winton with Milena Grenfell-Baines, and above, her UK paperwork MAIN PHOTOGRAPH: PA

Some dogs can remember names of their long-lost toys, study finds

Nicola Davis
Science correspondent

Dog owners may have trouble remembering which toy is Mr Squeaky, but such names can be seared into the memory of their pets, researchers have found.

Scientists previously discovered some dogs had the ability to learn the names of toys, with a border collie named Chaser having learned more than 1,000 of them. Now researchers have found some dogs can remember the name of a toy even if they have not seen it for two years.

Shany Dror of Eötvös Loránd University in Hungary, the first author of the study, said the results showed such dogs stored object names in their long-term memory, rather than simply having their memory refreshed by their owners through frequent play with the item.

Dror added that the study's findings could have implications for understanding the evolution of human language, given memory is one of its many components.

Writing in the journal Biology Letters, Dror and colleagues told how they studied five dogs who in earlier research had learned the names of 12 new toys. These toys were subsequently put away for two years.

In the new study, the dogs' owners brought the toys out of retirement. Three dogs had all 12, another had 11 toys and one dog had only five toys as some had been misplaced.

After allowing their dog to inspect the objects, each owner placed five or six of the "test" toys in one room in their home, alongside eight of their dog's other toys. The owners then moved into a second room and asked their dog to get each of the test toys one at a time. To minimise disruption, the owner replaced the chosen toys only when there were just three of the test toys left in the pile. The researchers watched online via video-recording devices.

The experiment was carried out twice for each dog, and was also repeated for four of the dogs using their remaining test toys.

The results revealed that overall the dogs picked the correct toy 44% of the time on average - with some having a success rate of up to 60%. These figures, the researchers added, were far above the level expected to occur by chance.

They stressed that while some dogs could learn object names, not every canine could do so, with the factors behind the skill unclear.

However, Dror noted dogs with the talent often had owners who spent a lot of time engaging with them.

"The more you invest in your dog, the more you will get back from the relationship," she said.



▲ The researchers stressed that not every dog could learn object names



Six children among 12 dead after boat 'ripped open' in the Channel

Continued from page 1

is facing calls to open legal routes so that people are not forced to take such desperate journeys before claiming asylum in the UK. In a further development, Darmanin called for a new migration treaty to be negotiated between the UK and EU to ease the path for asylum seekers.

Yvette Cooper branded the incident "horrifying and deeply tragic" as she said "vital" efforts to dismantle "dangerous and criminal smuggler gangs" and to boost border security "must proceed apace".

The home secretary said she was in touch with the French government and was being kept updated on the situation. "Our hearts go out to the loved ones of all those who have lost their lives, and all those who have been seriously injured," she said.

The French authorities were called to the incident when a dinghy was reported to have got into trouble off Le Portel off northern France, about 28 miles south-west of Calais.

All of the people onboard ended up in the water, many of whom were not wearing life jackets, according to the French coastguard. It is understood the shipwreck took place in French waters and UK search and rescue vessels are on standby.

The Boulogne-sur-Mer prosecutor, Guirec Le Bras, said at least 12 people died – including six minors and 10 females. He added that those killed were "primarily of Eritrean origin".

Frédéric Cuvillier, the mayor of Boulogne-sur-Mer, told the BBC a pregnant woman was among the victims.

In the past week more than 2,000 people seeking asylum have arrived in the UK on small boats. The latest tragedy comes after two people died on 11 August and another 50 were rescued as they attempted to cross the Channel. On 19 July one person died after being rescued; another person died a few days earlier when a boat carrying 72 people deflated.

Charities have demanded safe routes for asylum seekers from France so that the vast majority do not have to set foot in a small boat. Enver Solomon, chief executive of the Refugee Council, said the number of deaths in the Channel this year was "shockingly high".

"Enforcement alone is not the solution," he warned. "Heightened security and policing measures on the French coast have led to increasingly perilous crossings, launching from more dangerous locations and in flimsy, overcrowded vessels.

"In addition to taking action against the criminal gangs themselves, the government must develop a plan to improve and expand safe routes for those seeking safety. People risk their lives out of desperation, fleeing violence and persecution in countries like Afghanistan, Syria and Sudan in search of safety.

"We must create effective and humane pathways for those seeking refuge to reduce the need for dangerous crossings and prevent further tragedies," he added.

Amnesty International UK said: "No amount of 'smash the gangs' policing and government rhetoric is going to stop these disasters from unfolding time and again if the needs of people exploited by those gangs remain unaddressed."

Safe Passage International said: "Today's tragedy must be the last. We must not accept this government's refusal to prioritise opening new safe routes."

In 2023, the UK agreed to pay about £476m over three years to the French government to police the sea border. Speaking from Boulogne-sur-Mer, Darmanin claimed the UK still only "pays a fraction" of what the French government does on preventing migrant deaths on the Channel.

"We need a treaty – a migration treaty between the UK and the European Union – because the people who go now [are] people from the heart of Africa who want to go to the UK," he told reporters.

The Channel is one of the world's busiest shipping lanes and currents are strong, making crossing on small boats dangerous. People smugglers typically overload rickety dinghies, often leaving them barely afloat trying to reach British shores.

▲ *Emergency services with bodies of victims, above, as the minister Gérald Darmanin, below, speaks to the media*
PHOTOGRAPHS: DENIS CHARLET/AFP/GETTY; BENOÎT TESSIER/REUTERS (BELOW)



Analysis

Rajeev Syal



Does border security investment deter small boats – or just increase the peril for refugees?

The grimly familiar sight of body bags being unloaded from rescue boats was glimpsed again by the reporters on the shores of northern France yesterday. And again, ministers from both the UK and French governments expressed horror. But charities which work closely with refugees say it may be the policies of both governments that are inadvertently increasing the number of deaths of people seeking safety in the UK.

Charities and respected Labour figures such as Lord Dubs have pointed out that the reason so many people fleeing war and torture are coming to the UK by small boats – including those from Syria, Sudan and Iran – is because there are no viable alternatives.

The Labour government has introduced a set of immigration policies that have been broadly supported by progressive institutions. Keir Starmer has abandoned the Rwanda scheme – a plan which is estimated to have cost the taxpayer £700m. Yvette Cooper, the home secretary, has announced plans to reduce the backlog and process applications, which will bring down the numbers of asylum seekers stuck in hotels – popular initiatives with the public.

But there are concerns that Starmer's reluctance to announce "safe routes" into the UK, while also pledging more police activity across Europe, will force refugees into more dangerous crossings.

> *Asylum seekers are launching from more remote beaches, committing to longer journeys, and are more likely to die at sea*

Because of increased UK spending into French security over several years, there is a more "militarised" coastline. Cameras on beaches, night vision equipment and drones are employed to stop boats from being launched from accessible beaches. A three-year joint commitment of £476m was signed in 2023.

At the same time, Cooper has announced a new border security commander and more investigators, experts and analysts based across Europe, working with Europol and European national police forces.

In such circumstances, asylum seekers seeking refuge in the UK have little choice other than to take greater risks, charity workers say. They are launching from more remote beaches away from the police, committing to longer journeys, and are more likely to die at sea.

Steve Smith, the CEO of Care4Calais, among several organisations working along the French coast, says that the only way to stop people using small boats is to introduce safe ways of applying for asylum.

"Every political leader, on both sides of our Channel, needs to be asked how many lives will be lost before they end these avoidable tragedies. Their continued obsession, and investment, in security measures is not reducing crossings, it is simply pushing people to take ever increasing risks to do so."

However, Dr Peter Walsh, senior researcher at the migration observatory at the University of Oxford, said there was a lack of direct evidence that securitisation was a key factor behind tragedies. He said a range of factors was at play, including "the greater numbers of people travelling in each boat". He added: "At the moment, it is not clear whether this investment [in Channel security] has deterred people from making risky journeys or whether it has led to smugglers setting boats on longer and more dangerous routes."

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Boy, 14, accused of murdering dog walker in Leicestershire

Vikram Dodd
Hannah Al-Othman

A 14-year-old boy is being held on suspicion of murdering an 80-year-old man, named by police as Bhim Kohli, who died on Sunday after being allegedly attacked while walking his dog just 20 metres from his home.

Leicestershire police said Kohli was found at about 6.30pm in Franklin Park, Braunstone Town. Four other children who had been arrested were released by police yesterday.

A postmortem examination confirmed Kohli died as a result of a neck injury, pending further tests.

The Guardian understands that in July an incident was reported to police after Kohli was allegedly verbally abused by youths near his home. Police have said they are keeping an open mind about the motive and circumstances surrounding the suspected attack on him.

Police said Kohli was found in the park and died later in hospital. After inquiries, detectives arrested five children – a boy and two girls, all 12 years old; and a boy and girl, both 14. Police later said the 14-year-old boy remained in custody but the other four had been released with no further action.

The scene of the suspected attack, just inside the entrance to the park, was cordoned off by police tape.

Friends and neighbours described Kohli as a gentle family man, who tended to his allotment and was seen regularly walking his dog, Rocky.

A neighbour, Harjinder Kaila, 53, said: "He was a really good man, nice to everyone. He had a sense of humour, always joking. I'll really miss him."

She added: "He used to walk his dog every day. He'd go to the park, he'd be calling Rocky."

A man who did not wish to be named said he was a fellow allotment holder: "[Kohli] is a good friend of mine. Everybody called him the handyman, he was always pushing a barrow, a very handy man.

"He was skinny, but he was fit. He'd go walk the dog in the park every day, he'd take his wife swimming.

"Everybody round here loved him, everybody knew him. He was a nice bloke, a very nice bloke, I don't know how anybody could hurt somebody like that. I've known him for 40 years.

"Everything I can say about him is good, a very nice man, and his family. Just a very nice person, the best you can have."



▲ *Police officers near the crime scene in Franklin Park, Braunstone Town. The victim, Bhim Kohli, right, was allegedly attacked while walking his dog, barely 20 yards from his front door. Below, flowers being left near the crime scene, in Bramble Way*
PHOTOGRAPH: FACEBOOK

Leicestershire police said it had voluntarily referred itself to the police watchdog, the Independent Office of Police Conduct (IOPC), about the previous incident involving Kohli which was reported to them in July. During that incident it is alleged some of the comments made by the young people were racist.

Asked if detectives were considering a racial motive as part of their murder investigation, a police spokesperson said: "We will be keeping an open mind, but establishing any motive for the assault will form part of inquiries.

"We are continuing to establish the full circumstances and cannot comment further at this time."

Police have said they are speaking to local people as part of their investigation and want to speak to anyone who was in the park or in the area of Bramble Way between 6pm and 6.45pm on Sunday evening.



Det Insp Emma Matts, who is leading the murder investigation, said: "The circumstances surrounding Mr Kohli's death are extremely tragic and upsetting not only for his family and friends but also the wider community.

"We continue to offer support to the family through our family liaison officers and the local policing teams are in the area to provide reassurance and discuss any issues or concerns.

"The family are aware of the significant public interest in the death of their loved one and would like to thank people for their kind words and sympathy. At this stage the family are asking for privacy at this extremely difficult time.

"Our investigation into the assault on Mr Kohli remains ongoing.

"We continue to keep an open mind around the circumstances surrounding the incident as we work to establish what occurred in the park on Sunday evening. I would continue to urge anyone who can assist our investigation to come forward."

A spokesperson for the IOPC said: "We can confirm that we have received a referral from Leicestershire police in relation to this matter.

"We will carry out an assessment to decide what further action may be required from us."

Leicestershire Live quoted Kohli's daughter as saying her father had been left seriously injured after a group of young people allegedly first pushed him to the ground and then attacked him.

Speaking before her father died, the daughter said: "They pushed him, they kicked him in the neck, kicked him in the spine."

She said she had found her father lying on the ground: "He had been taking the dog for a walk. He was about 30 seconds away from getting home when he was attacked.

"He was lying under the tree and at first he was complaining about his neck and now he's not able to move his legs.

"We've lived here for 40 years and just recently there's been a lot of antisocial behaviour, which has been reported to the police."



Some serious offenders to be released to free up prison space, MoJ concedes

Kiran Stacey
Political correspondent

Some serious offenders will be eligible for early release under a government plan to free up space in prisons, the Ministry of Justice has admitted, despite previously saying they would not qualify.

The MoJ has confirmed that prisoners who have completed a sentence for a serious crime and are now serving a consecutive sentence for a less serious one will be allowed to leave prison earlier than planned under the scheme.

Officials said prisoners serving a sentence for a less serious crime would be allowed to leave after completing 40% of it, even if that sentence immediately followed one for a more serious offence.

The admission comes after an investigation by Channel 4 News, which found that one person who had completed a sentence for serious sexual offences and was now serving one for a lesser crime will be allowed to leave jail within weeks rather than next year, as previously planned.

A spokesperson for the MoJ said: "The new government inherited a justice system in crisis, with prisons on the point of collapse.

"It has been forced to introduce an early release programme to stop a crisis that would have overwhelmed the criminal justice system, meaning we would no longer be able to lock up dangerous criminals and protect the public."

They added: "The new lord chancellor announced in July that she was scrapping the previous government's early release scheme, replacing it with a system which gives probation staff more time to prepare for a prisoner's release. The government has also set out plans to recruit over 1,000 new trainee probation officers by March 2025 to meet additional demand."

Early releases are scheduled to start next week after the justice secretary, Shabana Mahmood, announced in July that British prisons were running out of places. She said then that the prison system was "on the point of collapse", describing the previous government as "the guilty men" who had put the public at danger by not investing in new prison places.

The National Association of Probation Officers has said the plans pose a risk to the public, but ministers have attempted to mitigate that by exempting those convicted of serious and violent crimes.



▼ *Displaced Palestinians collect food from a charity at a camp in Khan Younis, in the south of Gaza*
PHOTOGRAPH: HAITHAM IMAD/EPA

Cameron sat on advice that there was breach of law in Gaza, officials say

Patrick Wintour
Kiran Stacey

David Cameron, the former foreign secretary, sat on advice from Foreign Office officials in Israel and London that there was clear evidence of breaches of international humanitarian law in Gaza for which the UK risked being complicit, a former FCDO adviser has said.

The source, who contributed to the drafting of the advice, was speaking after the Labour government banned 30 of about 350 arms export licences due to a clear risk cited in a government memorandum published on Monday that they might be used in serious breaches of international humanitarian law (IHL).

The source said what has emerged in the memorandum "is similar to what was being sent to the government from at least February onwards in various drafts by FCDO advisers, much of it linked to the deteriorating humanitarian position in Gaza, but what has been eventually published is in much less strident language".

"The tragedy has to be considered. How many lives might have been saved if the arms export licences had been stopped then and not in September and what the potential ripple effect might have been on how other countries would have reacted."

The source added: "The advice being sent through to the Foreign Office was clear that the breaches of IHL were so obvious by Israel as the occupying power that there was a danger of UK complicity if the licences were not withdrawn."

A member of the past government said its legal advice was in some respects similar to that published by Labour concerning the treatment of detainees and humanitarian aid, but insisted the legal advice was iterative and changing, adding it never said explicitly that ministers needed to suspend arms sales to avoid breaching international humanitarian law.

The inquest into how it took a British government 10 months to conclude a risk of serious breaches of IHL existed came as the Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, mounted a fierce rhetorical broadside against Labour for letting down Israel.

After other Israeli ministers had only expressed disappointment at the British decision, Netanyahu went further, saying on X: "This shameful decision will not change Israel's determination to defeat Hamas, a genocidal terrorist organisation that savagely murdered 1,200 people on October 7, including 14 British citizens."

He added: "Just as Britain's heroic stand against the Nazis is seen today as having been vital in defending our common civilization, so too will history judge Israel's stand against Hamas and Iran's axis of terror… With or without British arms, Israel will win this war."

Israel is angry at the insensitivity of the announcement's timing, coming only 24 hours after it emerged that Hamas had killed six Israeli hostages. Ministers said the decision was announced on the first day MPs returned from summer recess.

The condemnation by Netanyahu came a day after he held a press conference doubling down on his commitment to eradicate Hamas but had not mentioned the UK arms ban. The attack appears to be part of a wider strategy to rally Israelis behind his hard line negotiating strategy and against criticism from the wider world.

Israeli sources admit relations with the UK are increasingly strained, but at present do not predict Netanyahu taking practical reprisals against the UK. The ban would almost entirely exclude all UK components for the F-35 fighter jet programme, seen as a significant loophole by pro-Palestinian groups.

By keeping British components to the F-35s out of the embargo, the UK hopes to minimise anger in Washington. Across the wider Middle East the Jordanian foreign minister, Ayman Safadi, praised the British decision but called for a wider boycott.

The UK prime minister, Kier Starmer, also conferred by phone with Mohammed bin Zayed, the influential president of the United Arab Emirates.

The UAE - after signing the 2020 Abraham Accords - became an unofficial restraint on Israel annexing the West Bank, and is critical to establishing any post-Hamas Palestinian administration in Gaza.

The FCDO source said wider lessons needed to be drawn from the internal handling of the issue.

The source said: "Israel highlights vital lessons globally for arms companies and countries who grant export licences as part of elaborate trade deals. The reality is that none of these licences are granted in isolation of other business and political interests, and are enmeshed with other forms of trade technology exchanges and security equity.

"Companies also bear a responsibility to respect international humanitarian and criminal law as do governments.

"Internally the Foreign Office does not seem very cohesive with disputes between humanitarian, legal and political teams, as well as with sections of the ministry of defence."

Analysis
Dan Sabbagh



Government's partial ban is not enough for human rights groups and leaves UK on shaky ground over British munitions

David Lammy's announcement of a partial ban on arms exports to Israel returns some credibility to the UK's arms control rules, but its obvious incoherence may leave Labour in an unsustainable position.

The UK government's own guidance has long been clear: it will "not issue export licences if there is a clear risk that the items might be used to commit or facilitate serious violations of international humanitarian law".

Yet the so-called clear risk test has been anything but transparent. The high level of casualties in Gaza – 40,786 at the last count, the majority civilian – includes more than 100 recorded as killed in at least three bombing attacks.

It raises obvious questions about whether they are war crimes because of a sheer lack of proportionality, though Israel says it is targeting Hamas fighters and leaders embedded within the Palestinian population.

Leaks about the number of civilians the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) is willing to accept as collateral damage are higher than those Nato militaries are generally considered prepared to accept. One report, from +972 magazine , said it was considered acceptable by the IDF to kill 100 civilians in an effort to eliminate a Hamas battalion.

Nevertheless, the previous Conservative government repeatedly concluded that Britain's modest arms sales to Israel (£42m in 2022) were perfectly legitimate.

Lammy recognised on Monday that there "does exist a clear risk" that British munitions could be used to facilitate a "serious violation" of international law – before going on to exempt parts for F-35 fighter aircraft, used by Israel during its Gaza bombing campaign.

Though assembled by the US defence giant Lockheed Martin, UK manufacturers supply 15% of its components. The UK government claims it is impossible to separate out what is going into jets for Israel and what is not, a claim seemingly at odds with high levels of control displayed by western governments over arms for Ukraine.

If there was any doubt about the importance of F-35s, Information, a Danish news site, reported that one of the jets was engaged in the 13 July strike on the al-Mawasi "safe zone" in southern Gaza, which the IDF said had killed the Hamas leader Mohammed Deif. Reports said at least 57 people were killed.

However, there is a more fundamental incoherence in Lammy's position. The grounds he cited for halting 30 arms export licences was not how Israel might have used them in bombing Gaza, but rather separate concerns about whether enough humanitarian relief was being permitted, and over the mistreatment of Palestinian detainees.

On the critical point – whether there was a clear risk that the intensity of the assault on Gaza was not legitimate – the decision was fudged, partly because of a lack of evidence from Jerusalem.

Western governments struggle, and often refuse, to accept claims about civilian harm caused by bombing or other military activity without conducting a level of investigation, typically via an inspection on the ground.

That is extremely difficult during a war, but not impossible. Local groups, specialist investigators and media organisations are able to compile accurate reports and raise questions about whether such attacks may amount to a war crime.

Politically, it is hardly surprising that Labour has sought a fudged middle ground. Its aim is to register diplomatic concern about the conduct of the war in Gaza before its party conference later this month, while trying to make clear the UK would be ready to help defend Israel.

But the reality is that the UK's guidelines for arms sales are simpler than the complexities of realpolitik. Yesterday morning, lawyers representing al-Haq, a Palestinian human rights group, and the Global Legal Action Network, who are challenging the legality of Britain's arms exports, said they would continue their case, focusing on F-35 parts and the overall use of munitions in Gaza. The debate is far from concluded.

Labour's aim is to register diplomatic concern on Gaza before its conference, while making clear the UK is ready to help Israel



▼ *The US is said to be Israel's biggest military backer, with Germany and Italy also cited as major suppliers*
PHOTOGRAPH: LÉO CORRÊA/AP

Arms to Israel
The countries banning sales

Banned or restricted arms sales

Italy
The foreign minister, Antonio Tajani, announced in January that Rome had decided after 7 October – the day Hamas attacked Israel, sparking the war in Gaza – to send no more weapons to Israel. However, the government has said that previous deals were being respected. Italy is the third-biggest supplier of military equipment to Israel, but contributes less than 1% of Israel's arms imports, according to Action on Armed Violence.

Spain
The Spanish foreign minister, José Manuel Albares, said in January that Spain had not sold arms to Israel since 7 October. In May, the government announced it would ban ships carrying weapons to Israel from docking at Spanish ports. Madrid has been one of Europe's most critical voices on the Gaza offensive.

Canada
Canada's parliament in March agreed in a non-binding vote to halt future military sales to Israel. The foreign affairs minister, Mélanie Joly, told the Toronto Star at the time that arms shipments would stop: "It is a real thing," she said.

Belgium
In Belgium, a federal state, local authorities have restricted weapons sales to Israel. The Belgian government has also campaigned for an EU-wide ban.

The Netherlands
A Dutch court in February ordered the government to stop supplying F35 fighter jet parts to Israel because of the clear risk of serious violations of international humanitarian law. However, the ruling did not cover components sent to states such as the US that could then be delivered to Israel.

No ban on arms sales

The US
Because of controversy over weapons sales, the US and many other countries do not disclose full details of their arms trade. However, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Washington is Israel's biggest military backer, providing an estimated 69% of its foreign-sourced weapons.

Joe Biden has criticised Israel's conduct, describing its bombing campaign as "indiscriminate", but the president has refused to halt the sale of US bombs. The administration in May suspended shipments of heavy, bunker-busting bombs to Israel but resumed some deliveries in July.

Germany
About 30% of global arms exports to Israel come from Germany, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. Sales include portable anti-tank weapons and rounds of ammunition for automatic or semi-automatic firearms. Berlin considers support for the Jewish state a matter of *Staatsräson,* or reason of state, because of its responsibility for the Holocaust.

Denmark
Denmark contributes to the F35 programme and is fighting a court application by several rights groups, including Amnesty International, that seeks to block arms sales to Israel.

Oliver Holmes

Visa appeal
Jenrick 'asked Home Office about student'

Geneva Abdul

The former immigration minister Robert Jenrick inquired into revoking a Palestinian student's visa, court documents have revealed.

Dana Abu Qamar, 20, a law student who led the Friends of Palestine society at Manchester University, was stripped of her visa in 2023 after speaking at a university demonstration on Gaza's historical resistance to Israel's "oppressive regime" and in a subsequent interview with Sky News.

On 1 December, the government revoked her visa on the assertion that her presence in the UK was "not conducive to the public good".

Disclosed emails reveal a member of Jenrick's team wrote to Home Office officials saying the then minister was interested in "finding out about Dana Abuqamar" and if it would be "possible to revoke her student visa", the Guardian understands.

A spokesperson for the European Legal Support Center, which provides support for advocates for Palestinian rights, said: "For a government minister to personally and arbitrarily intervene to remove a Palestinian student from the country and suppress her speech while her family are being killed in Gaza is truly unconscionable.

"Despite Jenrick's previous statements about the importance of protecting freedom of expression, he seems perfectly comfortable suppressing speech when it comes to Palestine solidarity, seemingly for ideological purposes and political gains."

Abu Qamar, a dual Jordanian-Canadian citizen of Palestinian origin who has lost 22 relatives in Israel's war on Gaza and whose paternal grandparents were displaced by the 1948 Nakba, drew criticism after a Sky News interview after the 7 October Hamas-led attacks.



▲ *Robert Jenrick suggested revoking student's visa after she spoke on TV*

"For 16 years Gaza has been under blockade, and for the first time they are actively resisting, they are not on the defence, and this is truly a once in a lifetime experience," Abu Qamar told Sky News in October 2023. "And everyone is, we are both in fear, but also in fear of what, how Israel will retaliate and how we've seen it retaliate overnight, and the missiles that it's launched and the attacks, but also we are full of pride. We are really, really full of joy of what happened."

After the 7 October attack, Jenrick suggested that visitors to the country would be removed if they incited antisemitism, and said there was a "legal process that must be followed properly" concerning visa holders whose conduct was being reviewed.

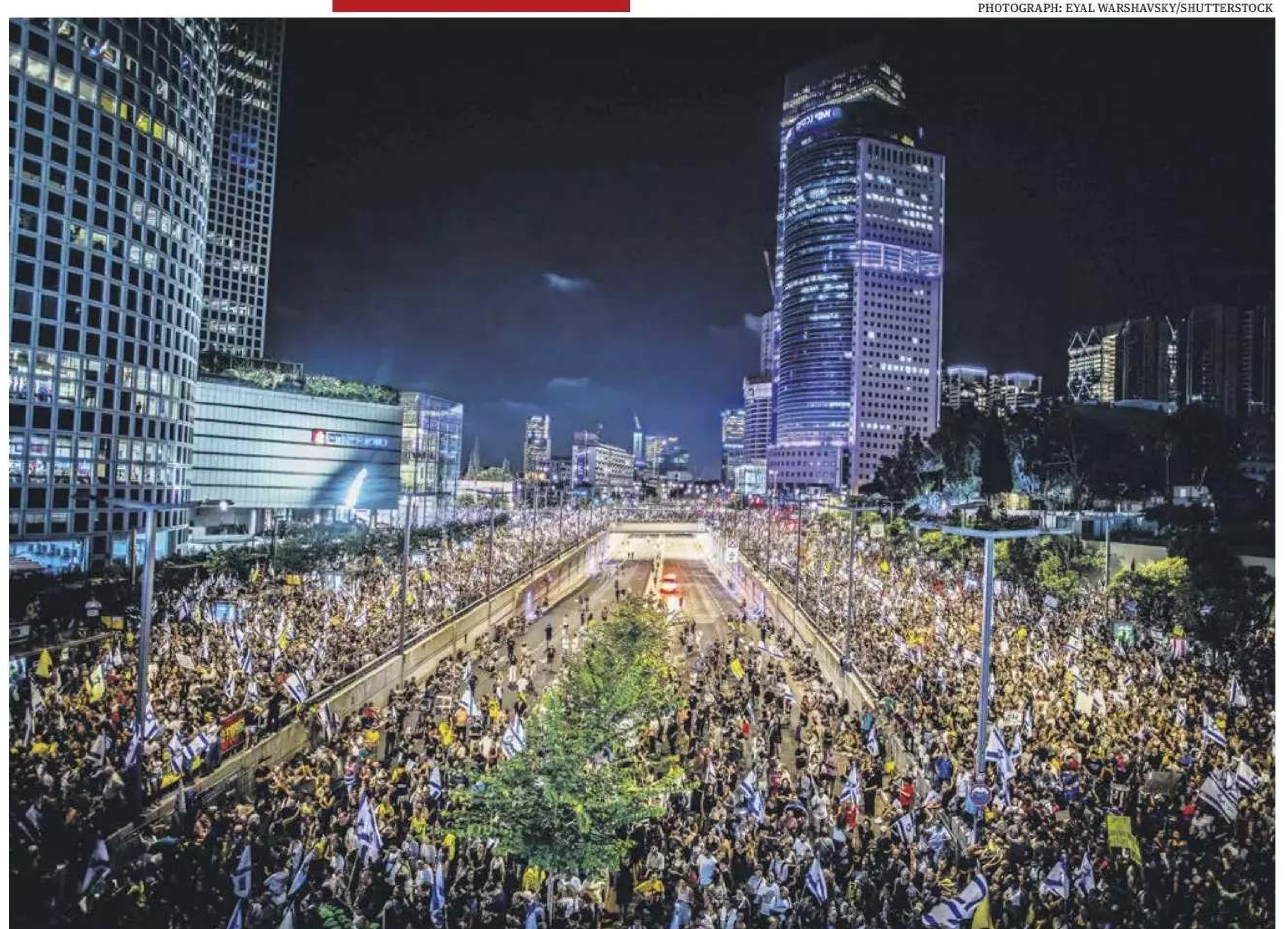
Abu Qamar, who is challenging the government decision through a human rights appeal later this month, has said she was misinterpreted, and does not condone the use of violence against civilians, nor has she expressed support for Hamas.

Yvette Cooper, the home secretary, will review the previous government's decision by 13 September.

A Home Office spokesperson said: "It would be inappropriate to comment while there are ongoing legal proceedings."

A source close to Jenrick said: "A visa is a privilege, not a right. Those that celebrate terror have no place in our country."

News
Israel-Gaza war



▼ *Protesters in Tel Aviv on Sunday night; traffic was blocked in the city for the third day yesterday*
PHOTOGRAPH: EYAL WARSHAVSKY/SHUTTERSTOCK

Netanyahu has 'lost his way', claims Gantz amid anger over hostage deaths

Bethan McKernan
Jerusalem

Benny Gantz, Benjamin Netanyahu's main rival, has accused the Israeli prime minister of putting his personal interests ahead of those of his country after he doubled down on Israeli control of the Gaza-Egypt border at a media conference on Monday, a position that has emerged as a key obstacle to a ceasefire deal.

Speaking in Tel Aviv yesterday, the centre-right National Unity party leader said Netanyahu had "lost his way" and saw himself as the state. "This is dangerous," Gantz said.

Netanyahu had insisted on Monday that Israel must retain control of the Philadelphi corridor on Gaza's border with Egypt, a stance that he has been warned jeopardises efforts to broker a ceasefire and hostage release deal in the war with Hamas.

In a press conference yesterday evening, Gantz said that while the corridor was important to prevent Hamas and other Palestinian militants from smuggling weapons into Gaza, soldiers would be "sitting ducks" and would not stop tunnels.

He also rebutted Netanyahu's assertion that if Israel were to pull out from Philadelphi, international pressure would make it difficult to return. "We will be able to return to Philadelphi if and when we are required," he said, while also calling for new elections. "If Netanyahu does not understand that after 7 October everything has changed … and if he is not strong enough to withstand the international pressure to return to Philadelphi, let him put down the keys and go home."

Netanyahu has not made regular speeches since 7 October, but gave a televised address on Monday after unprecedented protests across Israel in favour of a deal and a general strike, prompted by the discovery of six murdered hostages in Gaza. He ruled out making any "concessions" or "giving into pressure" to end the war. An unnamed source told CNN: "This guy torpedoed everything in one speech."

In July, Hamas and Israel agreed in principle to implement a three-phase plan proposed by Joe Biden. Hamas has since said the latest version of the proposal diverges significantly from the initial plan because new Israeli demands have been added, including a permanent military deployment along the Gaza-Egypt border and the Netzarim corridor, the new Israeli-controlled barrier cutting off Gaza City from the south of the Gaza Strip.

Hamas has long demanded a full Israeli withdrawal from the strip, and Egypt has said a heavy Israeli military presence on its border threatens the peace treaty between the countries.

The future of Philadelphi has also caused friction within Netanyahu's cabinet: his defence minister, Yoav Gallant, has publicly called for him to compromise on the issue, arguing that a deal that frees hostages should be the government's top priority.

Three of the six hostages whom the Israeli military said were shot in the head shortly before troops reached them, two women and an injured man, had been due to be released in the first stage of a ceasefire agreement.

The UN human rights chief, Volker Turk, yesterday called for an independent investigation. "We are horrified by reports that Palestinian armed groups summarily executed six Israeli hostages, which would constitute a war crime," the UN Human Rights Office said on X.

Tens of thousands of Israelis took to the streets on Sunday and Monday to protest against the deaths and the government's handling of the war. Traffic in central Tel Aviv was blocked by demonstrators for a third straight day yesterday. Many Israelis accuse the prime minister of valuing his political survival more than the hostages' lives; a ceasefire deal could cause Netanyahu's far-right coalition partners to abandon the government, triggering new elections.

"Hamas was the one that pulled the trigger, but Netanyahu is the one who sentenced [the hostages] to death," said an editorial in the liberal daily Haaretz.

In Gaza, Israeli airstrikes and ground fighting between Israel Defense Forces troops and Hamas continue unabated.

Yesterday, a civil defence spokesperson in the Palestinian territory said an Israeli raid on a college in Gaza City had killed two people and injured 30. Israel said Hamas was using the facility as a base.

Another two people were killed by the bombing of a displacement camp near the city of Khan Younis.

The Philadelphi corridor
Why is it so important?

What is the Philadelphi corridor?
The Philadelphi corridor is a ribbon of land 9 miles (14km) in length and 100 metres wide along Gaza's border with Egypt, including the Rafah crossing. It was designated as a demilitarised zone after the withdrawal of Israeli settlements and troops from Gaza in 2005.

Before 2005, Israel's 1979 peace treaty with Egypt had allowed it a limited number of troops in the corridor but no heavy armour.

After the Israeli withdrawal, it was the responsibility of Egypt and the Palestinian Authority, with Egyptian police deployed to prevent smuggling, until Hamas took control of Gaza in 2007. It was seized by Israel in May this year.

Why is it an issue now?
The Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, has said he intends for Israeli troops to remain in control of the corridor, including the Rafah crossing – to the alarm of Egypt. That has diplomatic ramifications, and has implications for negotiations for a ceasefire with Hamas and the release of Israeli hostages. The IDF says it has located numerous tunnels.

Is this a new thing?
Not entirely. The status of the corridor has long been on Netanyahu's mind. Even before Israel took the corridor, he said in January that Israel intended to control the Gaza-Egypt border. In terms of the ceasefire talks, Hamas has claimed Netanyahu added control of the Philadelphi corridor – and the Netzarim corridor, a strategic route bisecting Gaza – when negotiations were at an advanced stage, prompting its rejection of the proposals.



Why is it in the headlines again?
The retrieval of the bodies of six hostages at the weekend has caused an outpouring of anger in Israel over what is seen by some as the abandonment of those held by Hamas. Last week, Netanyahu forced a vote in cabinet to bind Israel to retaining control of the corridor, which was seen as a political strategy to placate far-right members of his government. On Monday, Netanyahu rejected calls to soften his demand to keep troops in the corridor as the price for a deal, saying it was vital for Israel to control what he called a lifeline for Hamas.

Are there other options than an Israeli military presence?
Experts have suggested that technological solutions including surveillance and ground sensors could control efforts to rebuild Hamas's smuggling tunnels.
Peter Beaumont

Elton John left with 'only limited vision' in one eye after infection

PA Media

Elton John has been left with "only limited vision" in one eye after a "severe eye infection".

The 77-year-old singer revealed he was healing from the infection in one eye, but said his recovery would take "some time".

In a post on Instagram, John said: "Over the summer, I've been dealing with a severe eye infection that has unfortunately left me with only limited vision in one eye.

"I am healing, but it's an extremely slow process and it will take some time before sight returns to the impacted eye.

"I am so grateful for the excellent team of doctors and nurses and my family, who have taken such good care of me over the last several weeks.

"I have been quietly spending the summer recuperating at home, and am feeling positive about the progress I have made in my healing and recovery so far."

Numerous stars replied to the post to wish the singer well, including the fashion designer Donatella Versace, the radio presenter Bob Harris and the actor Layton Williams. Versace said: "Take your time and recover, Elton. We'll be here waiting for your return when you're healthy and ready."



▲ *Elton John said he had been quietly 'recuperating at home'*

Harris added: "Sending you much love Elton."

It comes after it was announced that John's documentary film Elton John: Never Too Late would have its European premiere at this year's BFI London film festival.

At the start of this year John become an Egot - an Emmy, Grammy, Oscar and Tony award winner - after winning his first-ever Emmy.

Retail crime rise is due to targeted 'stealing to order', says Co-op

Sarah Butler

Organised criminals are behind the recent rise in shoplifting and violence against shop workers rather than people stealing to survive, one of the UK's largest grocery chains has told a parliamentary inquiry.

Paul Gerrard, the public affairs director at the Co-op, told the House of Lords justice and home affairs committee into shoplifting that a 44% rise in retail crime it experienced last year was mostly down to gangs stealing to order at scale - clearing shelves in some cases.

"There have always been people who steal to make ends meet … and you could argue that happens more in a cost of living crisis," he said. "But that is not driving the 44% increase.

"What is driving it is people stealing to order, people coming into store with wheelie bins or a builder's bag to steal the entire confectionery section or spirits or meat section.

"If one of my colleagues gets in the way they won't say sorry and walk out; there will be a violent threat- it might be a knife or a syringe. I've had colleagues attacked with a medieval mace. We've had colleagues lose their eye or miscarry. This is a level of violence, abuse and threat that nobody in retail has ever seen before."

He added that the retailer, which has more than 2,000 stores across the UK, had been forced to help staff move home as they had been followed from a store and threatened.

Retailers have said the number of incidents of racial abuse, sexual harassment, physical assaults and threats with weapons rose 50% last year, while thefts more than doubled to 16.7m incidents, according to the British Retail Consortium trade body.

The rise has coincided with a period of rampant price inflation. The cost of everyday goods has increased over the past three years at a rate not seen since records began in the 1970s, leaving many households struggling.

Reductions in shop staff in favour of technology such as self-checkouts is also thought to have contributed to the problems. Retailers blame a rise in organised crime and scarce police resources, saying police often fail to attend even when private security staff have apprehended someone with stolen goods.

Prof Emmeline Taylor of the University of London told the inquiry there had been a "tsunami" of retail crime, partly driven by wider social problems including poverty, mental health issues and drug addiction.

She said the recategorisation of the theft of items worth less than £200 as a summary offence in the 2014 Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act had led to many police forces no longer taking action against shoplifting below that level.

"Many of those offenders I deal with in my work [feel] they had a licence to steal so long as they don't surpass the £200 limit," she told peers.

Taylor said the resulting cost of crime prevention and security in some businesses meant they were "simply no longer viable" and some had been forced to close, leaving some areas like "food deserts".

Project Pegasus, under which 15 large retailers are working with the police to help tackle organised retail crime, was having some success, but was set up only to deal with activity that crossed police boundaries, Taylor said.

She said there could be prolific local offenders who were part of a criminal network in their community who were falling through the net.

One example was a homeless drug addict being housed by a local woman who, in return for accommodation, issued a "shopping list" of items to be stolen. Taylor said the Centre for Social Justice had suggested that 70% of local organised criminals were stealing to fund drug addiction.



▲ *The 44% spike has been blamed on gangs shoplifting to order at scale*



Enjoy it while it lasts … Visitors soak up the afternoon sunshine at West Bay in Dorset yesterday. The weather across the UK could be split this week, with heavy downpours forecast for southern England and a heatwave in western Scotland.

PHOTOGRAPH: GRAHAM HUNT/BNPS



GB News backer poised to buy Spectator in £100m deal

Mark Sweney

Sir Paul Marshall, the hedge fund tycoon who backs GB News, is poised to become the new owner of the Spectator in a deal worth up to £100m.

Marshall, who also owns the UnHerd website, has been in exclusive talks to buy the 196-year-old politically conservative magazine for the past month.

The deal is expected to close by the end of the week, although sources said hammering out the final legal details could result in the timeline slipping to early next week.

RedBird IMI – the consortium backed by Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed al-Nahyan, the vice-president of the United Arab Emirates, and the US investment firm RedBird Capital Partners – moved to take control of Telegraph Media Group in November last year from the Barclay family.

However, the deal was referred to UK regulators over press freedom and competition concerns. RedBird IMI was forced to put the Spectator and Telegraph titles back up for sale in the spring after the British government published legislation to block foreign states or associated individuals from owning newspaper assets in the UK.

The sale of the Daily and Sunday Telegraph is being run separately, and RedBird IMI last month whittled down the shortlist of potential buyers for the next round of bidding.

The second-round bidders are poised to make presentations and meet management at the Telegraph this week, including the group's chief executive, Anna Jones, and the Daily Telegraph editor, Chris Evans. Formal bids are due later this month.

Marshall, who is leading the bid as part of a consortium backed by Ken Griffin, the US billionaire founder of the Citadel hedge fund, is one of about four prospective buyers.

Others include the former chancellor Nadhim Zahawi, although it is unclear if he has achieved formal commitments from billionaire backers about financing a £600m bid.

RedBird IMI and a spokesperson for Marshall declined to comment.

NHS in England faces 'tipping point' with fewer GPs seeing more patients

Denis Campbell
Health policy editor

The NHS in England is heading towards a "tipping point" after which GPs will no longer deliver the majority of appointments because their numbers are falling so fast.

That is the conclusion of research which also shows that one in five surgeries has shut and the number of patients each family doctor looks after has soared over the past decade.

It is unrealistic to expect the diminishing number of GPs working full-time to continue providing around half of all consultations, as they do now, according to the study, which has been published in the journal BMJ Open.

"Falling GP numbers delivering the same number of appointments per 1,000 patients seems unsustainable," say the research team led by Dr Luisa Pettigrew from University College London and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM). "Therefore there is likely to be a tipping point in the near future where the majority of appointments in English general practice are no longer delivered by GPs."

Patients seeing a GP less often would damage both the quality and continuity of the care they receive, they added. The findings paint a picture of general practice becoming increasingly busy as a result of more GPs going part-time amid a relentless rise in demand for appointments and much heavier workloads.

> *'Rising GP workload is falling to a smaller number of GPs'*
>
> **Prof Kamila Hawthorne**
> *Royal College of GPs*

The four authors analysed data collected by NHS England, the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, and Care Quality Commission about the organisation, workforce and appointments provided by GP practices in England between 2013 and last year. They found that:

- 1,625 GP surgeries closed between 2013 and 2023 – a fall of 20% or 178 a year – reducing the total number from 8,044 to 6,419.
- The average number of patients on each surgery's books rose by 40% – or 291 a year – over the same period, from 6,967 to 9,724.
- Total patient numbers have grown from 56m to 62.4m.

Although the overall number of GPs working in the NHS rose, after taking changes in working hours into account those working the equivalent of full-time fell from 27,948 to 27,321.

The analysis also found that the average number of GPs per 1,000 people in England has fallen 0.53 to 0.45 – a drop of 15%. That decline is particularly stark among male GPs.

Prof Kamila Hawthorne, the chair of the Royal College of GPs, said the findings show that the NHS needs to recruit more GPs and also do more to retain ones already working. "Whilst GP workload is escalating, both in volume and complexity, this is falling to a smaller number of GPs than we had five years ago," she said.

"In the past year GPs and their teams have delivered an average of 30m appointments per month – over 4m more each month than in 2019 – while the number of fully qualified, full-time equivalent GPs has fallen by 601."

A Department of Health and Social Care spokesperson said: "The NHS is broken and these findings show how much general practice has been neglected. But this government will fix it by shifting the focus of healthcare out of hospital and into the community."

Macpherson 'refused chemo' after breast cancer diagnosis

Jamie Grierson

Elle Macpherson has said she was diagnosed with breast cancer seven years ago but is now in remission despite refusing chemotherapy.

The Australian supermodel and actor, who rose to fame in the 1980s, is publishing a memoir – Elle: Life, Lessons, and Learning to Trust Yourself – in which she says she took a holistic approach to the illness, going against the advice of 32 doctors.

In an interview with the Australian Women's Weekly, Macpherson discusses her choices after undergoing a lumpectomy seven years ago and being diagnosed with HER2-positive oestrogen receptive intraductal carcinoma – a type of breast cancer.

She says doctors advised her to undergo a mastectomy with radiation, chemotherapy, hormone therapy and reconstruction of her breast. But the founder of the beauty and wellness firm WelleCo decided against traditional medicine. Macpherson, 60, says she rented a house in Phoenix, Arizona, for eight months, where she "holistically treated" her cancer under the guidance of her primary doctor, a doctor of naturopathy, holistic dentist, osteopath, chiropractor and two therapists.



▶ *Model Elle Macpherson says she is now in remission from cancer*

She said: "It was a shock, it was unexpected, it was confusing, it was daunting in so many ways, and it really gave me an opportunity to dig deep in my inner sense to find a solution that worked for me."

Typical cancer treatment centres on surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy. There is no scientific or medical evidence that alternative therapies can cure cancer, Cancer Research UK says. The charity says some patients use complementary therapies alongside conventional medical treatments, or alternative therapies instead of conventional medical treatment.



David Lammy, the foreign secretary, leaves Downing Street after a cabinet meeting at No 10 yesterday PHOTOGRAPH: AVALON



Starmer faces test in Commons with vote over winter fuel allowance

Continued from page 1

a rethink amid fears that the move, worth up to £300, could leave thousands of pensioners struggling to pay their household bills this winter.

The scale of any potential mutiny remains unclear, as voting against the government could result in MPs losing the whip.

Rachel Reeves, the chancellor, has ignored calls to reverse her decision, instead focusing on getting more of the 800,000 people who qualify for pension credit but do not yet claim it to sign up.

At her first Treasury questions, Reeves confirmed that pensioners receiving housing benefit would automatically get any pension credit they were due. She has already extended the household support fund for the poorest households.

She repeatedly told MPs that increases to the basic state pension meant people would be substantially better off than a year ago, adding that the government was committed to further increases in the coming years.

"The basic state pension is worth £900 more than it was a year ago and will go up again in April next year because of the triple lock, which we have committed to for the duration of this parliament," she said.

It comes as a video has emerged of the Conservative leadership candidate Kemi Badenoch, who has heavily criticised the plans, previously calling for means-testing of the winter fuel allowance to be brought in.

"There is a lot of dead weight in how we run government," the shadow communities secretary said in the clip from 2022.

"I have people in my constituency telling me that they don't need the winter fuel payments that we give them because they can afford it. Why do we not have a more sophisticated mechanism for means-testing?"

Case backs shortfall claim

Simon Case, the head of the civil service, has backed the government's figures showing a £22bn shortfall was left by the Conservative administration.

The cabinet secretary said the Tories' failure to hold regular spending reviews had contributed to the financial uncertainty.

Case gave the assessment in a letter to Jeremy Hunt, the shadow chancellor, who had challenged the claim of a £22bn financial hole made by the chancellor, Rachel Reeves, saying it brought the civil service into disrepute. Hunt said the £22bn claim appeared to be contradicted by government spending estimates signed off just days beforehand.

Case's letter, leaked to the BBC and later published in full by Hunt, said the discrepancy could be explained by a rushed parliamentary timetable. Case said he was satisfied all civil service accounting officers had acted correctly. He added: "I would also note that the sizeable in-year changes to spending plans in recent years have resulted from the lack of a new spending review to replan departmental budgets in the face of significant pressures which have materialised since budgets were set in 2021."

Case also said that "unlike previous years" the current government "has set out to parliament the pressures that it is having to manage down and the actions it is taking to do so".

Hunt responded by saying the letter raised more questions than it answered. He said the £22bn was "a political device to justify tax rises".
Rowena Mason





Clockwise from above left, Louise Haigh, Yvette Cooper and Lisa Nandy in Downing Street yesterday PHOTOGRAPH: KARL BLACK/ALAMY

A spokesperson told the Telegraph, who first reported the story, that Badenoch was only talking about the richest pensioners.

Government sources insisted there were no plans to soften the decision, perhaps by moving the thresholds so more pensioners would receive the payment, either now or in the budget.

But Labour whips will be concerned that new MPs including Jessica Asato, Melanie Onn and Neil Duncan-Jordan, who has also tabled a Commons motion calling for a delay, have called for a rethink on the plans.

In the Commons, Rachael Maskell, the Labour MP for York Central, asked Reeves how she would protect pensioners who were above the pension credit threshold to "prevent cold, ill health or worse this winter".

Maskell said: "With the loss of the cost of living payments and winter fuel payments, an increase in the energy price cap and cost of living, pensioners are frightened about how they're going to keep warm this winter, as am I."

Paula Barker, the Labour MP for Liverpool Wavertree, said the charity



Age UK reported that there were about 1 million pensioners who "just miss out" on the winter fuel payment, noting these included people within £50 of the poverty line.

Dame Harriett Baldwin, a former Tory minister, told the Commons that Reeves had made a "chilling political choice to balance the books of this country on the very frailest

> 'Pensioners are frightened about how they will keep warm'
>
> **Rachael Maskell**
> *Labour MP*

shoulders". But a government source said: "When you're facing this kind of crisis in the public finances, you have to take the tough choices, and this is a difficult choice but it's the right one given the scale of the inheritance.

"By keeping a grip of the public finances we can protect the triple lock not just for this year or next year but for the whole parliament.

"We will put more money into pensioners' pockets and ensure we're able to protect the most vulnerable."

About five out of every six pensioners living below the poverty line could be at risk of being stripped of their winter fuel payments, according to a former pensions minister. Sir Steve Webb, now a partner at the pension consultants LCP, said analysis suggested that about 1.6 million older people who were below what was commonly regarded as the poverty line did not receive pension credit.

Sketch
John Crace



Dressed all in black, the Ministering Angel of Death relishes telling us that things are terrible

Onwards and sideways. Abandon hope all ye who enter here. To get the full effect of Project Miserable you only have to observe Treasury departmental questions. A place from which few come out alive. Presided over by the Ministering Angel of Death (AKA Rachel Reeves), dressed in black like some latter-day Morticia Addams.

You get the feeling that Reeves has been waiting all her life for this moment. Not just to be chancellor. But to be the Prophetess of Doom. The Slayer of Pleasure. For much of the time she can appear robotic at the dispatch box. Reciting her lines metronomically into the middle distance. Making eye contact with no one. A woman totally at home with saying no.

But mention the £22bn hole in the public finances and her eyes light up. Her voice becomes animated. This is her time. Her chance to shine. Think of her disappointment if, when she assumed office, she had found that the books balanced perfectly and the Tories had surprised everyone by being fit for office after all.

The Ministering Angel of Death would have been devastated. Where is the fun in being fiscally responsible if you can't go around cutting public spending and raising taxes? So Reeves never misses a chance to bring everyone back down to earth. There is no money, she grins. £22bn Black Hole Alert. Things are terrible. Worse than even she had dared imagine. For imagined, read hoped. This is her best life. I guess you take your fun where you find it.

Half an hour into the hour-long session and already everyone had lost count of the number of times Reeves and her team had mentioned the £22bn. The answer to almost every question was prefaced with "Well, you trashed the economy. Black hole. Talk to the hand." And there's nothing anyone can say about this, because it all happens to be true.

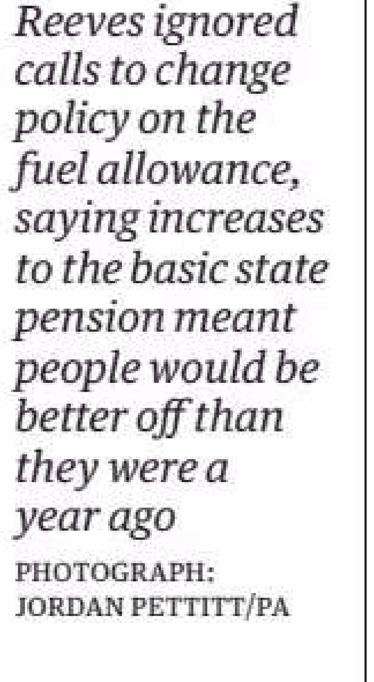
Julian Lewis took the unusual position of wondering whether the Tories should be congratulated for not leaving an even bigger hole. What's £22bn between friends? The Prophetess of Doom sighed. If only. Laura Trott - never the sharpest member of any team - crashed and burned. She mumbled something about pensions. To which Reeves demanded an immediate apology. For everything. For the last 14 years. For daring to be alive.

For most of the session, Jeremy Hunt tried to pretend he was invisible. Who can blame him? He's not going to be shadow chancellor after the Tory leadership election is over and there's nothing to be gained by copping unnecessary flak.

Not that Ministering Angel got things entirely her own way. She will have noted disquiet on her own benches at her cuts to the winter fuel allowance for pensioners. The rebellion is still at the polite stage, but it's there nonetheless, bigger than the government would have wanted. Cracks are emerging already. The honeymoon period is over so soon.

Reeves did her best to downplay the row. The pension was £900 more than it had been last year. She was going to personally insulate old housing. She was encouraging more people to apply for pension credit. But this wasn't as reassuring as she hoped. Anyone on more than £13,000 would suffer. Old people were going to be cold. We haven't heard the last of this.

> *Mention the £22bn hole in the public finances and her eyes light up. Her voice becomes animated. This is her time*



▲ *Rachel Reeves ignored calls to change policy on the fuel allowance, saying increases to the basic state pension meant people would be better off than they were a year ago*
PHOTOGRAPH: JORDAN PETTITT/PA

▼ *Tom Tugendhat launches his campaign for the Conservative leadership in Westminster yesterday*
PHOTOGRAPH: CARL COURT/GETTY IMAGES



Tories Tugendhat says voters no longer take party seriously

Jessica Elgot
Kiran Stacey

Tom Tugendhat has said people will "never vote for a party that they've stopped taking seriously" - promising to lead a "Conservative revolution" as he became the fifth MP to officially launch his campaign for the Tory leadership yesterday.

With Tory MPs voting today to eliminate one of the six contenders, the former security minister gave a speech in London at which he said there were tough lessons to be learned from the party's time in power, which was known for its frequent in-fighting.

"I will make the Conservative party a serious force again. I will make us respected for our experience and our realism, admired for our integrity, acknowledged for our achievements and given credit for seeing the errors that we may make and correcting them," he said. Tugendhat said he wanted to apologise for the party's conduct, adding: "I witnessed the recent political trauma with a combination of depression and anger. I witnessed the failed coups and the successful ones, and I saw duty give way to ego. That's why I'm standing before you today, because this country can change. We must change, and Britain deserves better."

Tugenhadt was speaking before a hustings session at which all six contenders - the others being Kemi Badenoch, Robert Jenrick, Priti Patel, James Cleverly and Mel Stride - made their pitches to Tory MPs in Westminster. Party sources said the meeting, which could prove pivotal in deciding who gets knocked out of the contest today, had seen MPs focus on asylum policy and defence spending.

Several of the contenders have sought to distance themselves from the last years of the Tory government, but have also come under pressure to explain their roles as senior ministers within them.

Jenrick, one of the frontrunners, reportedly hit out at Liz Truss's "cack-handed, careless and unconservative" mini-budget.

Asked why he had not spoken out against things he disagreed with while serving under Truss and Rishi Sunak, meanwhile, Tugenhadt said his job as security minister was "to keep the king's secrets". He added: "Those who are trying to kill us kept me busy enough already."

Tugendhat, who has lagged behind in MP endorsements compared with the frontrunners Badenoch and Jenrick, is widely seen as the candidate of the centrist One Nation wing of the party. His most high-profile endorsement is Nick Timothy, Theresa May's former chief of staff who was elected as an MP at the last election.

He said yesterday, however, that he was not a centrist but a "conservative candidate" and used his speech to promise tough action on migration and changes to Britain's relationship with the European convention on human rights, promising to leave that treaty if change could not happen. "The entire purpose of international treaties is to keep British people safe, not for us to worship international treaties," he said.

Tugendhat also promised a legally binding cap on net migration at 100,000 and devoted significant time to criticising Labour's policy to levy VAT on private schools, warning of the costs to state schools of potentially absorbing extra pupils.

Tugendhat, Jenrick and Badenoch are the three most likely to advance to the next stage, to take place at the Conservative conference at the end of this month. MPs will then whittle down the hopefuls to just two.

The final two candidates will be voted on by Tory members, with the winner expected to be announced on 2 November.

Scotland Green energy fund raided to fill £1bn budget hole

Severin Carrell
Scotland editor

Scottish ministers have raided a £460m green energy fund to help pay for pay deals that the government did not budget for.

Shona Robison, the Scottish finance secretary, said she needed to use the fund while also cutting non-essential spending by £500m to fill a £1bn hole in this year's finances.

The cuts include cancelling a flat-rate rail fares scheme, dropping free buses for asylum seekers, allowing councils to divert money from flood schemes and nature projects, cutting green travel projects and banning non-essential recruitment.

She confirmed that £800m of that shortfall arose from public sector pay deals this year, which had helped avert a number of strikes.

Thinktanks including the Institute for Fiscal Studies and the Scottish Fiscal Commission have warned that none of that money was budgeted for by ministers in Edinburgh, who failed to set out a clear public pay policy until after annual budgets were set. Shortly before Robison addressed the Scottish parliament, the public sector union Unison announced its members had rejected the latest pay offer.

Robison confirmed she was prepared to use all the money earmarked this year for Scottish net zero and climate projects raised in the ScotWind offshore licensing round. She warned the belt-tightening would continue unless the next UK government budget in October released more money for Scotland.



▲ *Shona Robison said public sector pay deals had helped avert strikes*

"If the Scottish government does not act, spending will continue to outstrip available funding," she said. "This is not sustainable and tough decisions will be required."

Robison had previously used £350m of ScotWind funds for general spending in January.

Michael Marra, Scottish Labour's finance spokesperson, said Robison was making "threadbare attempts" to blame the UK government for these cuts. "The culture of always blaming someone else comes with a cost, and it is meted out in jobs and service cuts," he said. "Scots are left paying more and getting less."

Robison noted Scotland's higher income taxes for the better off had raised £1.5bn more this year than it would have using UK tax rates, and helped fund £6.1bn in social benefits.

Roz Foyer, the STUC's general secretary, said the Scottish government could have used its powers to increase taxation on the rich. "We are in no doubt that brutal Tory austerity has had an undeniable impact on Scotland's finances," Foyer said. "But the Scottish government must take responsibility for their own cuts."



Two teenagers charged with murder of 13-year-old boy

Jamie Grierson

Two teenage boys have been charged with the murder of a 13-year-old boy who was stabbed to death in his West Midlands home, police said yesterday.

Jahziah Coke died after he was allegedly attacked in Lovett Avenue in Oldbury on Thursday.

West Midlands police said two teenagers had been charged with Jahziah's murder. They cannot be named for legal reasons. A man in his 40s was also charged with assisting an offender.

Jahziah's mother paid tribute to her son in a statement. "Jahziah was a very polite, kind and family-orientated young man," she said. "He was very loving and always smiling. His smile would light up the room. He was very kind-hearted."

The police said at this stage officers were not looking for anyone else as part of the investigation. The force appealed for dashcam, doorbell, CCTV or phone footage that might help the investigation.

Appearing at Birmingham magistrates court yesterday afternoon, the boys spoke only to confirm their names and that they understood what was happening. The district judge, John Bristow, remanded them into youth detention accommodation to appear at Birmingham crown court tomorrow.

The man in his 40s appeared separately at the same court yesterday morning and indicated a plea of not guilty. He was remanded into custody to appear on 1 October. He also cannot be named for legal reasons.

Additional reporting **PA Media**



▲ *Floral tributes at an address in Oldbury, near Birmingham, after Jahziah Coke was stabbed to death*

Jeremy Kyle guest felt he was 'thrown under a bus', inquest told

Matthew Weaver

A man who was thought to have killed himself after appearing as a guest on The Jeremy Kyle Show felt he was "thrown under a bus" by the ITV programme, his son told an inquest.

Steve Dymond, 63, was found dead at his flat in Portsmouth in Hampshire seven days after filming for the programme in May 2019.

Before he died, Dymond had claimed Kyle had encouraged the audience to boo him, leaving him "very upset" after the recording, according to a witness statement by his son Carl Woolley.

Woolley said he phoned his father who told him Kyle had "egged on" the audience to "boo him", the inquest at Winchester coroner's court was told on its opening day yesterday.

In his statement, Woolley said: "He told me he was 'made out to be a baddie' … and that no one had given him any chance to put his point across, and that Jeremy Kyle was constantly 'on him'."

Woolley added: "I said to him at one point: 'What did you expect going on a show like that?' And he said to me that he hadn't realised he would be made a mockery of. He said he felt he 'was thrown under a bus'."

Dymond had taken a lie detector test for the show after being accused of cheating on his ex-fiancee, Jane Callaghan, the inquest heard.

Woolley said his father told him the "lie detector had cast him as a liar, he said to me he wasn't lying … he said he had been 'taken for a mug' and 'pounced on' by the presenter."

When asked by the counsel to the inquest, Rachel Spearing, who had "jumped on him", Woolley replied: "Jeremy Kyle had got the crowd to egg on, to boo at him and stuff, he was cast as the liar before he had even spoken." Woolley said his father had continued to be "very upset".

The inquest heard extracts from a note which Dymond left for his son.

Reading from the note, Spearing told the inquest: "He says: 'I never ever cheated on Jane and that is what is tearing me to pieces and everyone thinks I am but I'm not a cheat. But I did tell her lies and I lied so much to Jane and that is why she didn't believe me.'"

The coroner, Jason Pegg, told the hearing the purpose of the inquest - due to continue until next Tuesday - was not to "apportion civil or criminal liability" to any person involved.

Samaritans can be contacted on freephone 116 123, or by email at jo@samaritans.org



▲ *Steve Dymond was found dead at his flat in Portsmouth in 2019 after appearing on The Jeremy Kyle Show*

Mother of Baby P back in prison for breach of licence

PA Media

The mother of "Baby P", who died after months of abuse, is back in jail two years after being freed.

Tracey Connelly was recalled to prison for breaching her licence conditions, in a move authorised by the justice secretary, Shabana Mahmood.

Connelly left prison in July 2022 after the Parole Board ruled she was suitable for release in May that year.

A Prison and Probation Service spokesperson said: "Offenders released on licence are subject to strict conditions and we do not hesitate to recall them to prison if they break the rules."

Now in her 40s, Connelly was jailed in 2009 for causing or allowing the death of her 17-month-old son, Peter, at their home in Tottenham, north London, on 3 August 2007.

She was released on licence in 2013 but recalled to prison in 2015 for breaching her parole conditions. She will have to face the Parole Board again to be considered for rerelease.

Jack Reacher would not exist without Birmingham libraries, says his creator

Jamie Grierson

It is said that heroes are made, not born. In the case of the fictional ex-military action man Jack Reacher, it has emerged that he was made in a library in Birmingham.

Many public libraries in the city are now under threat from closure, prompting Reacher's creator, the bestselling thriller writer Lee Child, to speak out.

The author, who grew up in Birmingham, told BBC Radio 4's Today programme yesterday his famous protagonist would never have existed without the city's libraries that he visited in his childhood.



▲ *Lee Child says the city's libraries made him a writer as he spoke out against proposed closures and cuts*
PHOTOGRAPH: GEOFFREY PUGH/ALAMY

He said: "You speak to any writer and they'll tell you the same thing – that those early years of reading, reading, reading, reading for decades, that's what turns you into a writer.

"So no book would ever get published if it wasn't for reading early in your life, and the way things were – my parents would buy us books if they could afford it, but that was twice a year: at your birthday and Christmas. And so if you wanted to read anything else ever, you had to go to the library."

Birmingham city council, which is attempting to plug a multimillion-pound hole in its finances, has proposed that 10 libraries could remain open full-time, operating as "community hubs", while 14 others would open part-time only.

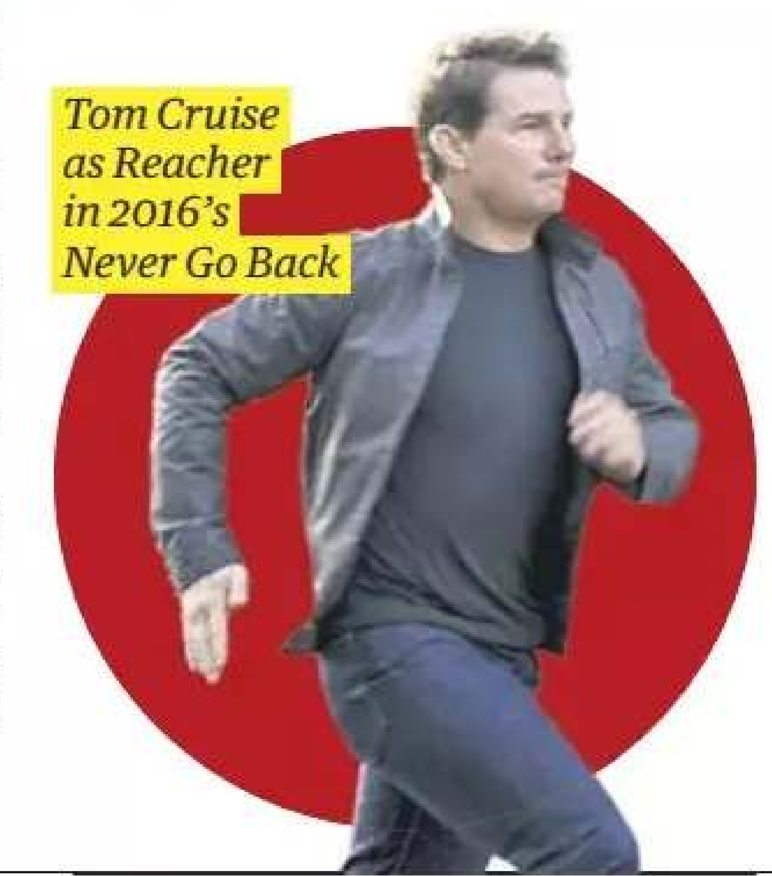
Child, 69, said he had started using a library in Handsworth Wood, a Birmingham suburb, adding: "Somebody put it in a wooden hut, and it didn't have very many books, and I'd read them all by the time I was six."

He then found another library in Perry Barr and "went there at least once a week before I left for university".

Child added: "I'm so sentimental and so emotional about it because that building saved my life at the time – it enabled it; largely created it. I just read and read and was lost in every subject, anywhere in the world, any time of history. I just adored it, and now it's under threat."

Child said he understood the council's financial problems and that his experience was more than 60 years ago when the world was different.

But he added: "I feel like if you've got to cut costs somewhere, that's a very sad thing, but don't cut them from libraries, because you are amputating a huge future for a lot of people."



Tom Cruise as Reacher in 2016's Never Go Back

'A soft target'

More than 180 UK libraries have been closed or handed to volunteer groups since 2016, data shows.

Freedom of information requests sent by the BBC to every UK library authority, along with Arts Council England data, found that about 950 libraries – a third of those remaining – reduced their hours in the past 8 years; 2,000 jobs have been lost, and dozens more possible closures over the next year were identified.

The most deprived communities – identified using the government's indices of multiple deprivation – were around four times more likely to lose a library than the richest.

The data confirms "what we have long suspected", said Isobel Hunter, the chief executive of the charity Libraries Connected. "Libraries are hit hardest in the very areas that need them most."

The former children's laureate Michael Rosen, speaking on BBC Breakfast yesterday, said that he feels a "mixture of horror and sadness" at the closures. "It's a soft target, isn't it? If you close libraries, nobody dies – that's what they think. But what's happening is it's society who suffers and people who suffer," he said. Ella Creamer

'Touching and real': Queer star bares all on his sex scenes

Catherine Shoard
Film editor

Daniel Craig has spoken about filming explicit sex scenes for Luca Guadagnino's Queer as it premiered at the Venice film festival yesterday.

Queer, an adaptation of the William Burroughs novel of the same name, is set in 1950s Mexico City and stars Craig as a rackety American expat who begins an affair with a student, played by Drew Starkey.

"There's nothing intimate about filming a sex scene on a movie set," said Craig.

"We just wanted to make it as touching and as real and as natural as we possibly could. Drew is a wonderful, fantastic, beautiful actor to work with and we kind of had a laugh. We tried to make it fun."

Guadagnino, an Italian director, is a regular in Venice: his debut feature, The Protagonists (1999), premiered at the festival, as did 2015's A Bigger Splash, Suspiria (2018) and 2022's Bones and All. He and Craig had first met two decades ago and had long hoped to collaborate. Said Craig of Queer: "If I wasn't in this movie and I saw this movie, I'd want to be in it. It's the kind of film I want to see, I want to make, I want to be out there."

Guadagnino, meanwhile, praised Craig's "generosity of approach", calling him one of "very few iconic actors who allow their fragility to be seen".

Many are tipping Craig for considerable awards recognition for his performance, which marks a return



▲ *Daniel Craig and his wife, Rachel Weisz, on the red carpet in Venice*

to the daring and experimentalism of his early career.

During the press conference, Guadagnino rebuffed a question about the sexuality of James Bond, the spy Craig played until recently, asking

> ***'If I saw this movie, I'd want to be in it. It's the kind of film I want to see, I want to make'***
>
> **Daniel Craig**
> *Star of Queer*

reporters to "be adult in the room for a second" before reminding them that "there's no way anybody could know James Bond's desires. The important thing is that he does his missions properly."

Burroughs wrote Queer in 1952 but did not publish it until 1985 for fear of being ostracised. Conceived as a sequel to Junkie, his first novel, it explores the parallels between obsessive love and drug addiction.

Guadagnino said he had first read the book aged 17 and become preoccupied with "the idea of seeing people and not judging them. Making sure that even the worst person is the person you identify with."

He credited the influential British film-making duo Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger as his creative inspiration in the adaptation.

Craig called Queer a "tiny book" with an "emotional thump", adding: "It is about love and loss and loneliness and yearning.

"If I was writing myself a part, and trying to tick off things I wanted to do, this would be all of them."

The film, whose supporting cast includes Lesley Manville and Jason Schwartzman, is expected to be released later this year.

Film review

Daniel Craig mesmerises as horny, boozy expat

Queer
Venice film festival
★★★★☆

Peter Bradshaw



▲ *Daniel Craig as the American expat Lee, with Lesley Manville in a show-stopping cameo as Dr Cotter*
PHOTOGRAPH: YANNIS DRAKOULIDIS

Queer is a story of lost love and last love and mad-about-the-boy obsession, featuring an excellent performance from Daniel Craig – needy, horny, moody, like his Knives Out detective Benoit Blanc on steroids and with something of his portrayal of Ted Hughes from 2003's Sylvia.

It's adapted by the screenwriter Justin Kuritzkes from the autobiographical novel by William Burroughs, directed by Luca Guadagnino and wonderfully shot by the cinematographer Sayombhu Mukdeeprom with digitally rendered landscapes and streetscapes which bring the boozy, bleary reality into alignment with the (disquieting) dream sequences.

Craig is Lee, an expatriate American based on Burroughs himself – the resemblance is made more overt in a Kubrickian sequence with hallucinatory flashforwards into old age. Lee lives cheaply and indolently in Mexico City after the second world war, hanging around bars, doing drugs and picking up guys – he is queer, and the word here (in a movie set in the 50s, from a book published in the 80s) might complicate still further the issue of when the word shed its derogatory overtones. Lee conceives a passionate obsession with Gene (Drew Starkey), a handsome American who appears to be straight but attracted to Lee.

Together they go on a weird holiday to South America, because Lee wants to try the fabled hallucinogen yage, or ayahuasca, because he's heard it gives the user telepathic powers and – poignantly enough – he wants to discover what Gene really thinks and feels about him. It's a bizarre and uproarious journey into the jungle whose comedy briefly annuls the pain of what he suspects is unrequited love and brings the two into contact with a fierce, reclusive, gun-totin', snake-wranglin' scientist and yage expert, Dr Cotter – a show-stopping cameo for Lesley Manville.

Craig always commands the screen in his regulation honorary consul crumpled white suit, hat, glasses and a pistol, which he bizarrely carries around openly holstered, a droll phallic symbol for this erotic cowboy who is very much a lover not a fighter.

Lee spends so much of his time walking from bar to bar, or – with a guy – from a bar to a hotel. (There's a great sequence when Lee walks to Nirvana's Come As You Are and that track never sounded more sensual.)

He hangs out with other guys in the same situation, chiefly the witty, dyspeptic Frank (Jason Schwartzman), but Lee is special: he seems more like an artist, although whatever artistry this is, it appears, like Wilde's genius, to be put into his life, or his bed. Craig's Lee is always sure of himself, somehow even when he's utterly distraught: when a doctor tells him to give up drugs, Lee sheepishly says that, yes, he really should, but this is only so that this doctor will prescribe some emergency opiates in the meanwhile.

It is a really funny, open, generous performance – perhaps the only disadvantage is that he upstages Starkey, just a little, and his mesmeric screen presence will draw our attention back to Lee, away from Gene and his ambiguous intentions and emotions. Craig is so dominant that sometimes it seems that Gene is almost not worthy of him.

People with greater mental resilience may live longer, study suggests

Tobi Thomas *Health and inequalities correspondent*

People with high levels of mental resilience may live much longer lives, according to the authors of research that found the link to be especially prevalent in women.

The study, which has been peer reviewed and involved researchers from Sun Yat-sen University in China, found a link between people with high levels of mental resilience and a lower risk of death from all causes.

The researchers looked at data from the US Health and Retirement Study (HRS), a long-term, nationally representative study of adults in the United States who are at least 50 years old. It began in 1992 and records information on economic, health, marital and family status of participants, updated every two years.

The study then looked at HRS data from 10,569 participants, from 2006 to 2008, when questions on mental resilience were collected for the first time. The average age was 66, with 59% being women. They were followed until May 2021, during which period 3,489 participants died.

The researchers found a link between the mental resilience of the participants and their death from any cause, and found that those who had a higher mental resilience score had a lower risk of death.

Women had a stronger association between a high mental resilience score and a lower risk of death. Resilience scores were also linked to 10-year survival probability scores. The highest quartile were 53% less likely to die over the next 10 years compared with the lowest.

The researchers said the study was observational and a causal link between mental resilience and death should not be inferred. They added that variables such as genetic factors and childhood adversity were not included.

Mental resilience was measured on a scale that included perseverance, calmness, a sense of purpose and self-reliance. The researchers said: "Various factors including, but not limited to, meaning in life, positive emotions, self-rated health and satisfaction with social support have been identified as potential influences on psychological resilience."

Caroline Abrahams CBE, charity director of Age UK, said: "The authors are careful not to conclude that there are causal links … but it's notable that so many studies looking at what helps us in later life comment positively about a list of similar factors."

53%

The most mentally resilient quartile were 53% more likely to survive over 10 years than the least resilient one

Companies brace for criticism as final report on Grenfell released

Robert Booth
Social affairs correspondent

Companies and public authorities involved in the Grenfell Tower refurbishment are braced for wide-ranging criticisms when the final public inquiry report on the 2017 disaster is released at 11am today.

The 1,700 page report is expected to turn the spotlight on serious failings among national and local politicians, builders, material manufacturers and sales people, fire testing experts and the London fire brigade. The inquiry chair, Sir Martin Moore-Bick, and his inquiry panel colleagues, the architect Thouria Istephan and housing expert Ali Akbor, will also make multiple recommendations to the government to ensure such a disaster is not repeated.

Hundreds of bereaved people and survivors granted core participant status in the £200m inquiry were shown the report yesterday to allow them to digest in private what many hope will be a landmark moment in their fight for justice.

The report, published seven years after the fire, was delayed from earlier in the summer in part due to the high number of people - about 250 - who faced criticism and needed to be informed in advance.

Keir Starmer will respond to the report in the House of Commons at lunchtime and the Metropolitan police have said they will deploy detectives on the Operation Northleigh team investigating possible criminal charges to comb through the findings.

A spokesperson for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government said: "We will never forget the 72 lives lost at Grenfell and remain absolutely committed to securing justice for the bereaved, survivors and the wider community. In the government's manifesto, we set out our commitment to improving building safety, including accelerating cladding remediation, ensuring anyone responsible for the building safety crisis pays and better protecting leaseholders."

Today's publication will be the second and final inquiry report. In 2019, phase one conclusions focused on the night of the fire and found London fire brigade commanders were not properly prepared and there were "serious deficiencies in command and control". It also found the cut-price refurbishment breached building regulations and the plastic filled aluminium cladding panels made by Arconic were the main cause of the fire spreading.

The longer second phase report will explain why the fire at Grenfell Tower happened, examining the decisions that led to the refurbishment, the conduct of the construction companies and shortcomings in government regulation.

The inquiry has already been told by its lead counsel that "each and every one of the deaths … was avoidable". The government has previously said it was "truly sorry" for its "failure to realise that the regulatory system was broken and it might lead to a catastrophe such as this".

Many of the companies, consultants and contractors involved were accused of engaging in a "merry-go-round of buck passing" and several key witnesses from Arconic, the US industrial giant whose French subsidiary supplied the combustible cladding panels, refused to face cross-examination.

Attention will next turn to Scotland Yard, which said in May it was investigating 58 individuals and 19 organisations for possible crimes including corporate manslaughter, gross negligence manslaughter, fraud, perverting the course of justice and misconduct in public office. Charging decisions are unlikely soon, meaning trials may not start until 2027, a decade after the fire.

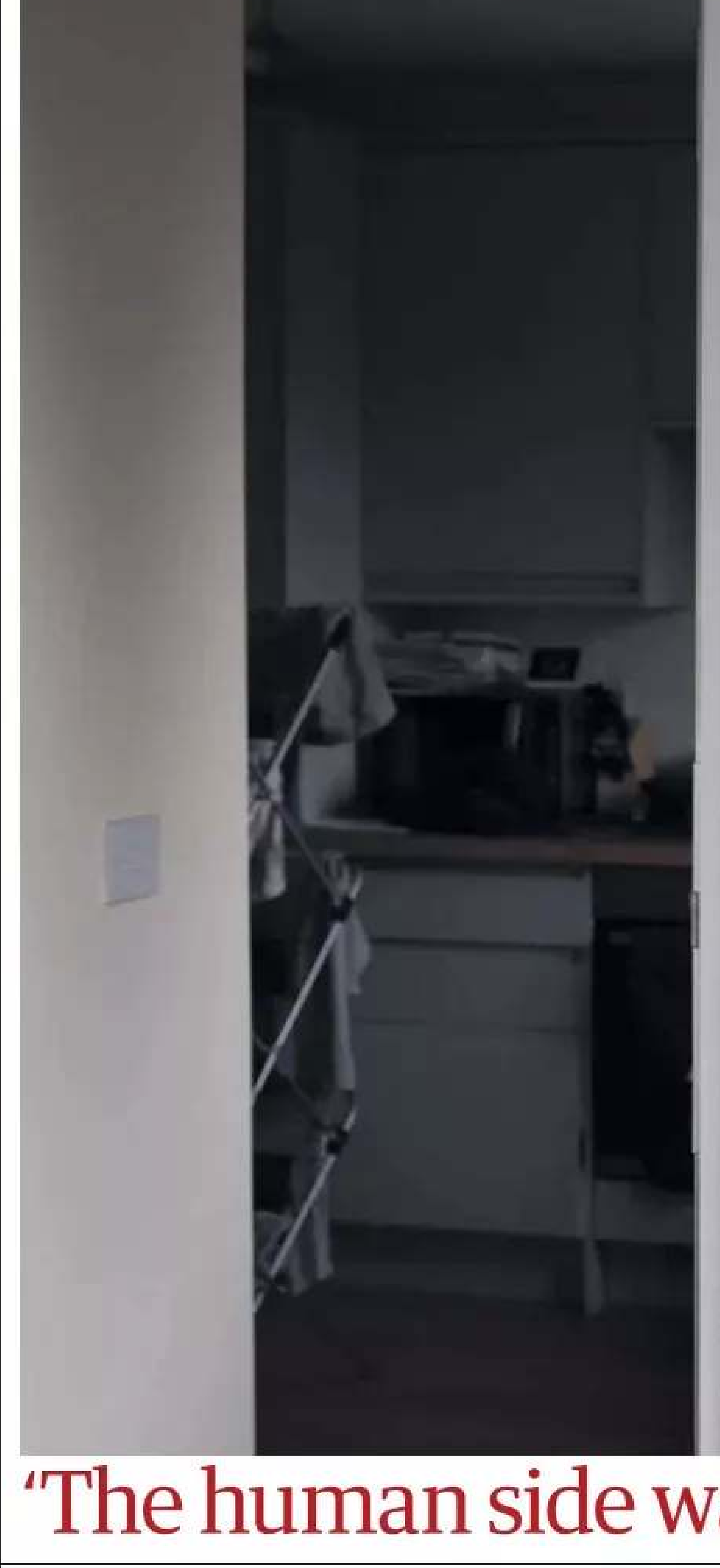
Ed Daffarn, a survivor and leading member of the families group Grenfell United, said: "We, I, personally, need to know what happened. No one in the public inquiry ever gave us the truth. They engaged in a carousel of blame pointing … For me it's absolutely vital that I discover the truth of what happened and I'm reasonably confident that we're going to get that when the report comes out."

Joe Powell, the Labour MP for Kensington and Bayswater, this week wrote to Angela Rayner, the deputy prime minister and housing secretary, urging her to fully accept the inquiry recommendations and accelerate works to fix other buildings with dangerous cladding.

"We must urgently accelerate remediation work to fix dangerous cladding and ensure that those responsible for the building safety crisis are held accountable and pay to put it right," he said.



▲ *The Grenfell Tower memorial to the 72 lives lost in the disaster*





'The human side was missing'

Survivors and bereaved on what they've lost - and what they want to happen now

Robert Booth

In Ed Daffarn's flat stands a bunch of feathers from sparrow hawks, owls, falcons, even a kookaburra. Over the past seven years he has added to it, plume after plume, steadily replacing a collection that turned to ashes when Grenfell Tower went up in flames.

Daffarn, an avid birdwatcher who had predicted disaster on a blog eight months before the fire, only just escaped from his 16th-floor flat by groping through thick smoke. His feathers were among a lifetime's possessions - cricket gear, mementos of his late parents - reduced to ash in the tragedy that claimed 72 lives.

Now, as the Grenfell Tower public inquiry prepares to publish its final report into the causes of the June 2017 fire, his collection is starting to look healthy again. He sits in his living room, binoculars poised on the table overlooking a communal garden that is visited by owls. But nothing can be the same.

Daffarn, 62, is just one member of a large community that has spent years struggling to rebuild lives while confronting a torrent of shocking revelations from the 400 days of inquiry evidence. In person or online, Daffarn sat through almost all of it, well over 1,000 hours of evidence.

"I'm beginning to kind of see a future without Grenfell as being that all-consuming centre of everything, which it was for years and years," he says.

But there can be no "moving on" for him. It is just "trying to kind of find other things that you can put around that trauma - trauma for those in the tower, trauma for those on the estate, trauma for the local community, trauma for myself".

A lot rests on the 1,700-page inquiry report published today for the approximately 600 survivors, bereaved and local residents



◀ *Ed Daffarn's collection of feathers is starting to look healthy again after the ones he had spent a lifetime collecting were reduced to ash in the fire*

PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN GODWIN/ THE GUARDIAN



◀ Ed Daffarn, who lived in Grenfell Tower and survived the fire, describes it as 'a violent attack on our community' and still finds it hard to settle down in his new council flat
PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN GODWIN/ THE GUARDIAN

> **'I'm beginning to see a future without it as the all-consuming centre of everything'**
>
> **Ed Daffarn**
> *Grenfell Tower survivor*

who were granted formal core participant status. Daffarn hopes the chairman, Sir Martin Moore-Bick, a former appeal court judge, finds relatable human language that reaches to what he sees as the heart of the matter - why so many people took decisions that placed profit above human safety.

Even more, he hopes it arms the community with the truth of what happened - from David Cameron's ministers slashing red tape to the conduct of the combustible cladding system manufacturers, Arconic, Celotex and Kingspan, in bringing potentially dangerous products to market.

He reels off the questions: "What was the role of the government deregulation? What was the implication of Arconic knowing that this product could kill 60 to 70 people? What were the implications of Kingspan and Celotex seemingly gaming the system in order to be able to get their product on buildings over 18 metres [tall]?"

Then there are verdicts awaited on the Kensington and Chelsea tenant management organisation (TMO) landlord body "failing us on health and safety and treating us like third-class citizens, and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea not scrutinising the TMO and failing in their primary duty of keeping the people safe".

The hope is that the guilty can be brought to justice and the bereaved and survivors will be empowered to demand reforms. Findings of fact should also remove any excuse for the Metropolitan police not to proceed with criminal prosecutions and create a lasting legacy for the lives lost which is "anyone making any decisions, always needs to put people before profit".

Away from campaigning, Daffarn and many others affected by Grenfell describe more personal struggles. Shah Aghlani was on the phone to his mother, Sakina Afrasehabi, when she died, aged 65, in her 18th-floor flat alongside her sister Fatima, who was visiting. He told the inquiry: "I heard every last breath my mother and auntie took."

Talking to the Guardian before the inquiry report, he said he has been scarred by the trauma "like a tattoo on your mind". After waking each day, he spends the first half hour trying to calm his anxiety.

"My mother, and that image of her sitting tight for the fire brigade to rescue her, and being on the phone, this is on my mind all the time," he said. "This is the sort of thing that no amount of psychotherapists, psychiatrists or medication can help.

"When you go through that sort of experience, not only do you become intolerant, impatient, nervous, not being able to concentrate, losing your memory, it affects you in so many layers, in different ways."

He described how hard it was for him to enjoy simple pleasures like going to a restaurant for his daughter's birthday. "My children - I don't know when was the last time I actually sat down to watch a movie and laugh with them."

Aghlani campaigns for better safety systems for disabled people and fears, from ongoing experience with his own family, that public authorities still do not respond properly to their needs.

For him, too many of the witnesses to the inquiry seemed to be covering up their actions. "What was missing was the human side," he said. An exception was the testimony of John Hoban, the local authority building control officer who sobbed when cross-examined and explained how he was overwhelmed by his workload of up to 130 projects at a time following spending cuts caused by austerity.

"That's where I could come to terms with the fact that I don't want this person behind bars," Aghlani said. "He has probably suffered enough in his conscience."

But he wants others prosecuted because "they lied and did everything in the book to get away from it". He added: "And I don't believe they are sorry for what they have done. If they were sorry they would have changed the way they were doing things after … The spirit of Grenfell still lives and that is what angers me. I want that spirit purged. I want to kill that spirit."

It is a common demand from the bereaved. Earlier this week, Sandra Ruiz - whose 12-year-old niece, Jessica Urbano Ramirez, died - said: "People who have made decisions putting profit above people's safety need to be behind bars."

Trauma emerges in unpredictable ways. Daffarn said that for him and others, one consequence has been an "inability to bond with any form of accommodation".

"I've been here for well over two and a half years," he said of his new council flat. "I've still got a cardboard box and a bit of wood in the hallway as a table … If I left here tomorrow, I would barely even remember that I've been here."

He only recently installed lampshades and hung some pictures.

He didn't just lose his home in a passive sense, rather it was "a violent attack on our community". A new hobby of playing golf provides a small measure of relief.

"All of the people that I play with, don't mention Grenfell," he said. "We just talk about superficial sporting events around the world. Have a little moan about the golf club, complain about high handicaps … It's really, genuinely helped me."

The struggle to finding ways to thrive and grow during the long wait for justice is a common theme.

Tiago Alves was a promising 20-year-old physics undergraduate at Imperial College London when the fire struck the tower, killing young people he grew up with such as Yasin El-Wahabi, who died with his parents and siblings.

Alves and his family escaped the flames, but not the trauma.

He has spent the past seven years campaigning for justice and battling to hold on to his academic potential.

"I completely lost any interest in what I was doing," he said. His grades slipped. "Mental health was a massive factor - around exam season when it was quite high stress, quite high anxiety, I would have episodes because of all the trauma that I've had."

The disaster had deep roots for Alves. Since the age of 10 he had been helping his father, who came to the UK from Portugal, write emails to the TMO landlord.

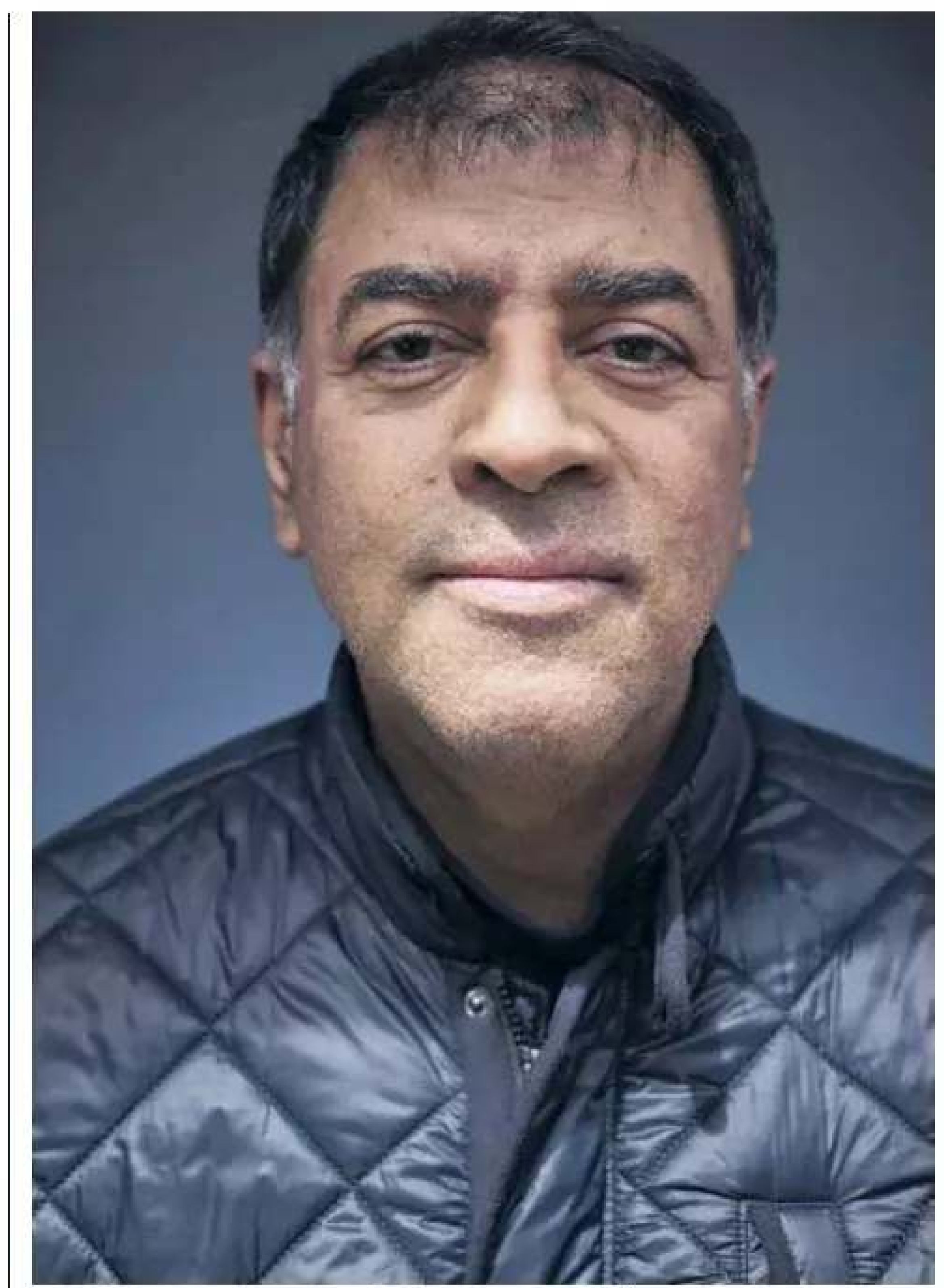
He said: "The emails and documentation of what happened back then proves that what we were saying [about problems with the council landlord] wasn't just this exaggerated version of events."

Alves added: "This is a culture that exists all over the country, this idea that people who live on estates are second-class citizens … I hope [the inquiry] opens the book to … reconsidering everything that relates to this perception."

Keeping his academic career alive has been part of his efforts to defy that idea. He is now working on a PhD in high energy physics at Imperial and is based at Cern in Switzerland, home of the Large Hadron Collider, preparing a major experiment to take place later this decade in South Dakota.

He views his career as a partial rebuke to people such as the former Conservative minister Jacob Rees-Mogg, who suggested in 2019 that Grenfell residents lacked "common sense" for following fire brigade instructions to stay put instead of evacuating immediately. Rees-Mogg later apologised.

"I found [it] absolutely abhorrent when he said that," Alves said. "It drives me forward to prove that we are a very intelligent community. We are people who have had to adapt time and time again to everything that's been thrown at us. And hopefully by me doing this, I'm proving to him that he was wrong when said those words."



◀ Shah Aghlani was on the phone to his mother and aunt when they died in the fire. He says he has been scarred by the trauma 'like a tattoo on your mind' and struggles with anxiety daily
PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID LEVENE/ THE GUARDIAN

▼ Tiago Alves spent years before the fire helping his father email the TMO about problems with the tower block
PHOTOGRAPH: ANTONIO OLMOS/THE GUARDIAN



'Dynamic pricing' by Ticketmaster faces European Commission scrutiny

Josh Halliday
North of England editor

Ticketmaster's ability to raise the price of concert tickets based on demand is being investigated by the European Commission, the Guardian has learned, as the UK's competition watchdog launched an "urgent review" into the Oasis concerts fiasco.

The US-owned ticketing giant has been warned it may have breached laws in the UK and Europe for inflating the price of some Oasis tickets from £135 to £350.

Ticketmaster has compared its use of so-called "dynamic pricing" to airlines and hotels, which increase costs based on demand, and said it was artists and their management who set the prices.

The UK's Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) said yesterday it was "urgently reviewing" the use of dynamic pricing after Oasis fans criticised the "scandalous" inflation of ticket prices.

A spokesperson for the regulator said: "Consumer protection law requires businesses to be fair and transparent in their dealings with consumers, and businesses must give clear and accurate information about the price people have to pay. Failure to do so may breach the law."



▲ *Oasis fans have criticised the 'scandalous' inflation of prices on Ticketmaster for the band's reunion tour*
PHOTOGRAPH: ADAM VAUGHAN/ EPA

> *'This is not a system that seeks to maximise joy'*
> **Lara Wolters** *MEP*

A spokesperson for the European Commission confirmed it was looking into the use of dynamic pricing for concert tickets amid growing concerns among MEPs. Lara Wolters, a Dutch MEP, said she wanted new laws to protect European consumers against this type of price inflation.

"The only winners in this situation are big ticketing platforms, at the expense of fans who find themselves priced out of gigs. Companies know far more about their customers than vice versa," she said. "This is not a system that seeks to maximise joy by filling the stadium with an artists' biggest fans, but to maximise profit from music like any other product."

Dynamic pricing for concerts is common in the US but relatively new in the UK and Europe.

A spokesperson for the European Commission confirmed it was examining the practice as part of its "fitness check" of EU consumer laws, due to be published in the coming months.

The review is expected to highlight the problems of dynamic pricing before MEPs consider solutions, potentially including an outright ban.

The spokesperson said that while the practice itself is not unlawful, the way it is used could breach EU directives - such as if the price of a product is increased once a consumer has placed the ticket in their online basket.

The Guardian has approached Ticketmaster for comment. Neither Oasis's management nor the Gallagher brothers have commented on the criticism.

Record spent on live music

Spending on the UK live music sector and associated businesses has reached a record £6.1bn as a wave of acts from Elton John to Beyoncé cashed in on the pent-up demand to attend shows.

Live, the federation representing the live music industry, revealed the sector's contribution to the UK economy topped £6bn for the first time last year, as fans denied live experiences during the Covid pandemic rushed to buy tickets.

The figure, which adds up the economic impact of more than 55,000 gigs, concerts, festivals and events, is 17% up on 2022 and 35% up on 2019. The £6.1bn is derived from direct ticket sales, but also from spending at an event and at businesses nearby that benefited around the date it was held.

The growth in the sector last year was fuelled largely by concert revenues, which climbed 19% year on year, driven by major tours such as those by Beyoncé and Coldplay, which accounted for almost three-quarters of the total £6.1bn. Emma Bownes, the vice-president of programming at AEG Europe, which owns the O2 in London, said that 2023 was its biggest ever for ticket sales. Mark Sweney

Pension required for 'basic' retirement rises by 60%

Rupert Jones

The average pension pot needed for a "basic" retirement has risen by almost 60% in three years, according to research that highlights how the cost of living crisis has left many fearing they will never be able to retire.

The study from the Resolution Foundation thinktank and the Living Wage Foundation charity found price rises across housing, energy, food and transport had helped to "significantly" increase the cost of securing an adequate income in retirement.

According to the researchers, the average pension pot required for a basic standard of living in older age has jumped from £68,300 in 2020-21 to £107,800 in 2023-24.

They found that on average a worker needed £19,300 a year in retirement to achieve a basic standard of living. But this figure masked wide variations depending on whether someone owned or rented their home and was single or in a couple.

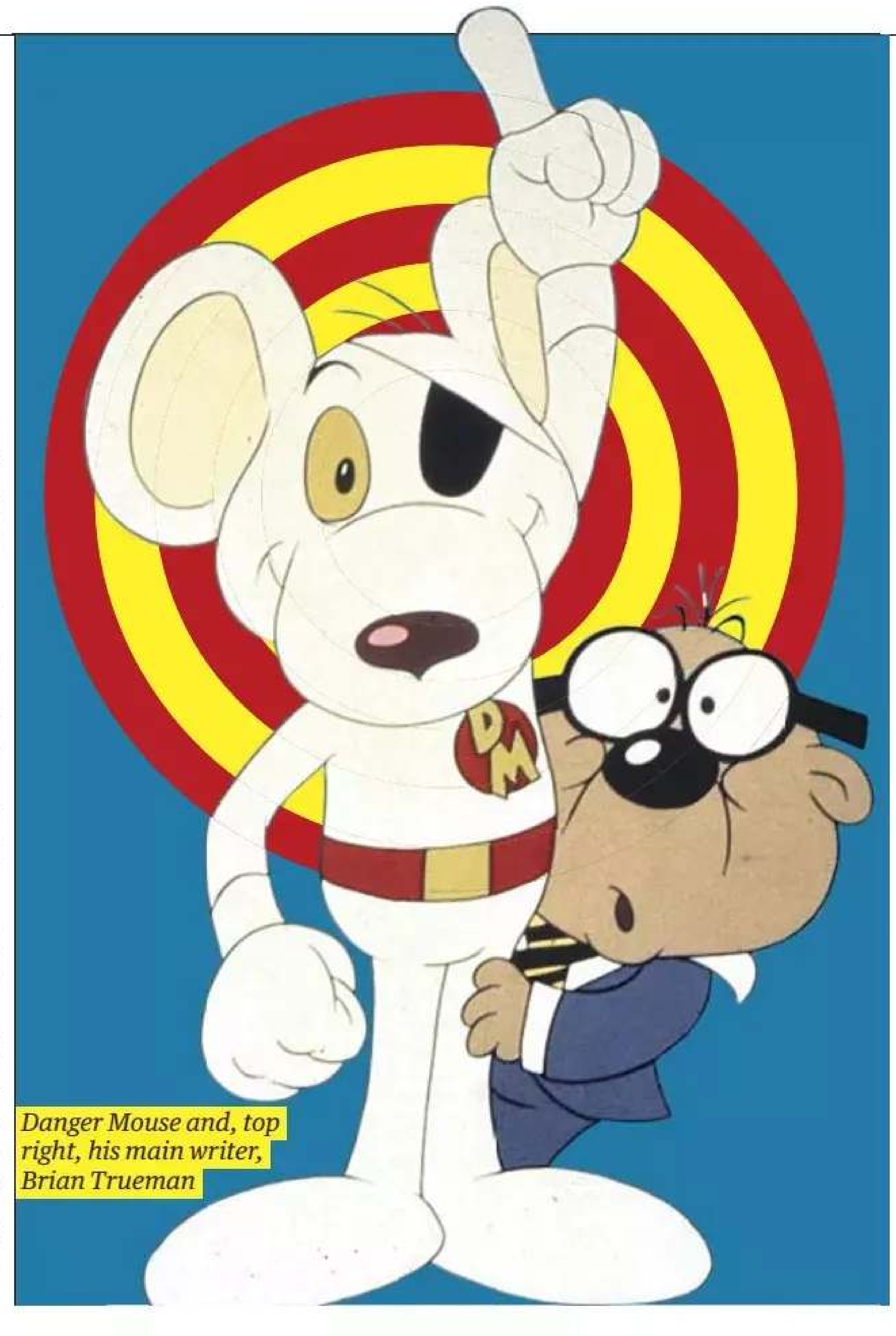
When averaged out across different types of relationship, housing type, gender and average life expectancy, the researchers calculated that the average pension pot size needed in addition to a full state pension to achieve an annual income of £19,300 in retirement was £107,800.

The full rate of the state pension is £221.20 a week or £11,502 a year.

The Pensions and Lifetime Savings Association has developed a retirement living standards index to show what life in retirement looks like at minimum, moderate and comfortable levels and earlier this year said the amount a single person needed to meet the minimum threshold had risen to £14,400 a year.

The moderate threshold would require about £31,300 a year, while the amount for a comfortable standard had climbed to £43,100 a year.

A poll of 3,000 people, released along with the research, found 53% of adults saving into a pension felt they would never be able to retire, while 62% believed they would have to work several years beyond retirement age. Low-paid workers, women and those renting their home "had more negative feelings" about their retirement savings and the future.



Danger Mouse and, top right, his main writer, Brian Trueman



Danger Mouse writer Trueman dies aged 92

PA Media

The Danger Mouse writer Brian Trueman has died at the age of 92.

In a Facebook post, his son Jonathan said he died in Stepping Hill hospital in Stockport on Sunday after a short illness.

"If you knew him, we're sure you'll appreciate that he wouldn't want a sentimental tribute here," he said. "But we're equally sure that you'll know just how much he'll be missed."

Trueman was best known for his work writing for the animation company Cosgrove Hall Films, particularly the original Danger Mouse episodes, voiced by Sir David Jason.

Eyewitness





Caribbean carnival in New York
A woman in an elaborate costume taking part in the annual West Indian American Day parade, one of the world's largest celebrations of Caribbean culture, which attracted an estimated 3 million spectators to Crown Heights in the borough of Brooklyn on Monday.
PHOTOGRAPH: ROY ROCHLIN/GETTY

At least 51 killed in Russian missile strike on Ukrainian training centre and hospital

Shaun Walker *Kyiv*
Peter Beaumont

Ukraine experienced one of the deadliest attacks of the war yesterday when a Russian missile strike on the central city of Poltava hit a military training institute and a nearby hospital, killing at least 51 people and injuring more than 200 others.

The Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, said in a video address that according to preliminary information the attack had been carried out using two ballistic missiles and had "partially destroyed" one of the buildings of the Poltava military institute of communications, leaving people trapped under the rubble.

Ukraine's first lady, Olena Zelenska, called the attack "a stunning tragedy for all of Ukraine" in a post on X. "The enemy hit an educational institution and a hospital," she wrote.

Some left worried messages on the institute's Facebook page seeking information about their loved ones.

Zelenskiy said he held Russia accountable but had ordered a "full, prompt investigation into all the circumstances of what happened".

The strike has triggered anger on Ukrainian social media after unconfirmed reports said it had targeted an outdoor military ceremony, with many blaming officials who allowed the event to take place despite the threat of Russian attacks.

Ukraine's land forces confirmed that Ukrainian service personnel were killed in the strike and said an investigation was under way to establish whether enough had been done to protect those in the facility. It said measures would be taken to prevent a recurrence.

Separately, it was announced last night that four Ukrainian cabinet ministers had resigned, ahead of an expected government reshuffle.

The deputy prime minister for European affairs, Olga Stefanishyna; the minister of strategic industries, Oleksandr Kamyshin, who has played a prominent role in boosting arms production; the minister of justice, Denys Maliuska; and the minister of the environment, Ruslan Strilets, all submitted their resignations.


▲ *People injured in the attack on Poltava, far from the front line*

The US national security spokesman, John Kirby, condemned the attack as "another horrific reminder of Putin's brutality towards the people in Ukraine" as the White House vowed more aid to Kyiv would be dispatched in the coming weeks.

Poltava's governor, Philip Pronin, said his administration could not provide more details of the circumstances of the strike "for security reasons". He added: "The enemy is using any means to bring Ukraine more pain and disorientate Ukrainians. Please trust only reliable sources."

158
Number of drones that Ukraine targeted on Russia at the weekend, damaging a refinery near Moscow

Maria Bezugla, a Ukrainian MP who regularly criticises the country's military leadership, accused high-ranking officials of endangering the lives of soldiers by allowing such events to take place. "These tragedies keep repeating themselves. When will it stop?" she wrote on the messaging app Telegram.

Poltava is about 200 miles south-east of Kyiv, far from the frontline. Photographs posted on social media showed bodies, some in uniform, lying on the ground covered in dust and debris. Substantial damage could be seen on two nearby multistorey buildings, with at least five floors struck in one of them where the outer wall had been blown out.

With others still feared buried under debris, Oleksandr Khorunzhyi, a spokesperson for the Ukrainian emergency services, said in televised comments: "Every 15 to 20 minutes there are minutes of silence to listen out for people who are under the rubble."

A statement from Ukraine's defence ministry said the "time

Mongolia Ukraine condemns failure to arrest Putin on visit

Pjotr Sauer

Ukraine yesterday called for Mongolia to face "consequences" after its failure to arrest Vladimir Putin during the Russian leader's first visit to a member nation of the international criminal court (ICC) since it issued an arrest warrant for him last year.

Putin received a red carpet welcome in the capital, Ulaanbaatar, where he held talks with President Ukhnaagiin Khürelsükh.

Heorhii Tykhii, a spokesperson for the Ukrainian foreign ministry, called Mongolia's decision not to arrest Putin "a heavy blow to ICC and the international criminal justice system". Tykhii wrote on X: "Mongolia allowed the indicted criminal to escape justice, thereby sharing responsibility for his war crimes. We will work with partners to ensure that this has consequences for Ulaanbaatar."

The ICC issued an arrest warrant in March 2023 against Putin for illegally deporting hundreds of children from Ukraine. The warrant obliges the court's 124 member states to arrest the Russian president and transfer him to The Hague for trial if he sets foot on their territory.

Before Putin's trip, Ukraine and several human rights groups had urged Mongolia to arrest Putin on

▶ *Vladimir Putin meets Mongolia's president, Ukhnaagiin Khürelsükh, in Ulaanbaatar yesterday*
PHOTOGRAPH: VYACHESLAV PROKOFYEV/SPUTNIK/KREMLIN POOL/AP

'Welcoming Putin, an ICC fugitive, would be an affront to the many victims of Russian crimes'
Human Rights Watch
Before the visit

'Just because he's rich'
Lula defends X ban with message to world
Page 27

Far right in Germany
Minorities react with alarm after AfD gains
Page 29



between the air raid siren and the incoming deadly missile was so short that it caught people at the moment they were evacuating to the shelter".

It added that rescue crews and medics had saved 25 people at the scene, including 11 who had been dug out from the rubble.

Although the identities of the victims were not immediately disclosed, Serhiy Beskrestnov, a Ukrainian Telegram blogger followed by many radio, communications and electronic warfare specialists in Ukraine's military, posted a tribute to "my signals operator comrades".

Russian Telegram channels described the site of the hit as a military training facility.

It was not immediately clear how many of the victims of the attack were members of the Ukrainian military or were civilians.

Russia has struck civilian targets repeatedly throughout the two and a half years of full-scale war, and has intensified its relentless air assault on Ukraine in recent weeks. It launched a large missile and drone attack on Kyiv in the early hours of Monday, most of which was intercepted by Ukrainian air defences.

On Monday night, two people were killed in the city of Zaporizhzhia, according to the regional governor, including an eight-year-old boy.

Ukraine also targeted Russia with more than 158 drones at the weekend, damaging an oil refinery near Moscow and a power station.

Zelenskiy repeated his calls for more western air defences and urged allies to allow their long-range weapons to be used for strikes deeper into Russian territory to protect Ukraine.





arrival. "Mongolia would be defying its international obligations as an ICC member if it allows Russian president Vladimir Putin to visit without arresting him," Human Rights Watch said on Monday. "Welcoming Putin, an ICC fugitive, would not only be an affront to the many victims of Russian forces' crimes, but also undermine the crucial principle that no one, no matter how powerful, is above the law."

There was little chance that Mongolia, which relies on Russia for 95% of its petroleum products and has abstained from criticising Moscow over its invasion of Ukraine, was going to follow up on its ICC commitments. Instead, Putin was greeted with an honour guard, some on horseback and dressed in traditional uniforms reminiscent of those worn by Genghis Khan, the 13th-century Mongol ruler.

Khürelsükh later hailed Putin's visit to the country, while the Russian leader said the two nations' relations were "developing in all directions".

Putin's visit was expected to focus on energy cooperation, as Mongolia lies along the planned route of a Russian pipeline intended to transport 50bn cubic metres of natural gas annually from Russia's Yamal region to China.

Mongolia, bordered by Russia to the north and China to the south, has long tried to maintain a balancing act between the two while also developing ties with Japan, South Korea and the US.

For Putin, the trip to Ulaanbaatar represents the latest in a series of overseas visits aimed at countering the international isolation he has faced as a result of the invasion of Ukraine. He visited China in May, North Korea and Vietnam in June and Kazakhstan in July.



'State treason' Top physicist on missile project jailed

Pjotr Sauer

A prominent physicist has been sentenced to 15 years on treason charges in the latest prison term for a scientist working on Russia's hypersonic missile programme.

The Moscow city court found Alexander Shiplyuk, the 57-year-old director of a top Siberian science institute, guilty of "state treason" yesterday after a trial held behind closed doors.

More than a dozen senior Russian scientists have been arrested in recent years, at least three of whom, including Shiplyuk, were working at the prestigious Khristianovich Institute of Theoretical and Applied Mechanics, in Novosibirsk, Siberia's largest city and a major scientific hub.

Experts have said the trials indicate a growing paranoia among Russian political elites regarding its military production.

The Russian independent news outlet Novaya Gazeta reported that Shiplyuk was suspected of having shared classified information at a scientific conference in China in 2017.

Shiplyuk denied the allegations, saying the information he presented was already publicly available in open sources.

The BBC's Russian service reported that Shiplyuk refused a plea deal.

In May, Russia sentenced Anatoly Maslov, a 78-year-old professor of aerodynamics at the same institute, to 14 years in prison on treason charges.

Russian media said he was accused of passing classified data related to Russia's hypersonic missile programme to German intelligence.

Russia has billed itself as a world leader in hypersonic missiles, cutting-edge weapons capable of carrying payloads at up to 10 times the speed of sound to punch through air-defence systems.

Russia's loose definition of espionage makes it easy to bring cases against scientists and the court cases are conducted in secret, with few details about the charges being made public.



▲ *Alexander Shiplyuk was found guilty yesterday behind closed doors*



◀ *Venezuela's president, Nicolás Maduro, claps and smiles during the latest broadcast of his regular Monday evening TV show*
PHOTOGRAPH: MARCELO GARCIA/ MIRAFLORES PALACE/ REUTERS

Maduro moves Christmas to October as he tries to calm crisis

Tom Phillips
Latin America correspondent

"Whatever happened to Christmas?" Frank Sinatra once asked. In Venezuela, the answer is that it has been brought forward to October.

The country's strongman president, Nicolás Maduro, made the curious announcement that this year's festivities would begin in October in the midst of a political bleak midwinter for his crisis-stricken land.

"It's September and it already feels like Christmas. So this year – as a way of paying tribute to you and thanking you – I'm going to decree that Christmas be brought forward to 1 October," he said during a TV appearance.

Venezuela's authoritarian leader promised all Venezuelans a Christmas of "peace, happiness and security".

That is unlikely given the uncertainty and anger produced by Maduro's decision to claim victory in July's presidential election without providing proof. A growing body of evidence suggests he actually lost the election badly to his opposition rival Edmundo González – hence his refusal to release detailed voting tallies. Authorities have now issued a warrant for the arrest of González.

On Monday Bloomberg reported that the US was poised to announce individual sanctions against 15 senior administration figures for their alleged obstruction of "the holding of free and fair presidential elections".

Those expected to be targeted reportedly include the foreign minister, Yván Gil, the supreme court president, Caryslia Beatriz Rodríguez Rodríguez, and a top electoral council member, Rosalba Gil Pacheco.

Military officials responsible for a harsh post-election clampdown , in which more than 20 people were killed and 1,700 thrown in jail, are also expected to face sanction.

While unusual, Maduro's decision to move Christmas celebrations forward is not unprecedented. He has done the same several times since taking office after the premature 2013 death of his mentor, Hugo Chávez.

The Christmastide manoeuvre appears at least partly designed to shift attention from one of the worst peacetime economic collapses in modern history.

Ireland sets up inquiry into sexual abuse at Catholic schools

Shane Harrison
Dublin

The Irish government is to set up a statutory commission of inquiry into sexual abuse at schools run by Catholic religious orders after a preliminary investigation found almost 2,400 allegations of historical abuse.

The investigation, led by a top barrister, Mary O'Toole, documented 844 alleged abusers in 308 schools run by 42 religious orders across the Republic of Ireland.

One hundred and thirty seven people who participated in her inquiry completed in-person interviews and 12 provided written submissions.

Most of those who took part were men in their 50s and 60s.

The Irish education minister, Norma Foley, described the report as a "harrowing document, containing some of the most appalling accounts of sexual abuse".

The inquiry was launched in 2022 after an RTÉ radio documentary highlighted historical sexual abuse at the fee-paying Blackrock College, a Dublin school associated with many Irish rugby internationals and businessmen. Fifty-seven people have alleged they were abused there. In November 2022, the Spiritans in Ireland, who ran the school, apologised to all victims on behalf of the order.

Allegations were also made against the Jesuits, the Carmelite Fathers, the Christian Brothers, the Sisters of Mercy, and the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart.

Foley and other ministers have paid tribute to the survivors for speaking up about their experiences.

It could be several years before the proposed statutory commission of inquiry publishes its findings.

Brazil's X ban shows world need not yield to 'far-right' Musk, says Lula

Tom Phillips
Rio de Janeiro





▲ *A supporter of Jair Bolsonaro, Brazil's far-right former president, holds a sign thanking Elon Musk at a rally in Rio. The Brazilian president, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, left, said the world 'isn't obliged to put up with Musk's far-right free-for-all just because he is rich'* PHOTOGRAPH: DADO GALDIERI/GETTY

The Brazilian president, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, has said he hopes the crisis surrounding the social network X in Brazil might teach the world that "it isn't obliged to put up with [Elon] Musk's far-right free-for-all just because he is rich".

Brazil's supreme court voted unanimously on Monday to uphold the ban on X, now largely inaccessible in one of its biggest global markets.

The suspension was first ordered on Friday as a result of the company's refusal to obey court orders requiring the removal of profiles accused of spreading disinformation and for the social network to name a local legal representative.

Debate is raging in Brazil over preventing more than 20 million X users from accessing the service – and the political wisdom of doing so, amid fears the move could strengthen the country's far-right movement by allowing it to pose as a champion of free speech.

Thousands of supporters of the former far-right president Jair Bolsonaro are expected to take to the streets on Saturday for an independence day rally some believe will be turbocharged by anger over the supreme court's decision.

Musk has aligned himself with Bolsonaro's radical political movement, just as he has championed the former president's most important international friend, Donald Trump.

Yesterday, Musk shared an invitation to Saturday's demo with his 196 million X followers. It claimed Brazilians would turn out to "march for freedom, protesting judicial overreach and defending free speech".

Twenty-four hours earlier Musk shared another post advertising the Bolsonarista march. It claimed "patriotic Brazilians" were preparing to "flood" São Paulo's financial heart to demand the impeachment of Alexandre de Moraes, the supreme court judge behind the original X ban.

Musk has painted the suspension of X as part of a dictatorial leftwing plot to silence conservative voices.

The ban was endorsed on Monday by a panel of five supreme court judges. "No one can seek to perform their activities in Brazil without complying with the laws and the federal constitution," argued the supreme court justice Cristiano Zanin.

Pedro Doria, a Brazilian columnist who often writes about the intersection between technology and politics, said he was concerned Moraes had gone too far in his battle to rid social media of anti-democratic far-right voices.

He also voiced shock at what he called last week's "quite absurd" decision to ban the use of virtual private networks (VPNs) to access X, punishing such uses with a daily fine of 50,000 reais (£6,760).

But Doria balked at Musk's attempt to portray himself as a free speech torchbearer, saying that under his leadership X had blocked content during the May 2023 Turkish election.

The platform said at the time the move was "in response to legal process and to ensure Twitter remains available to the people of Turkey".

"He talks about free speech but he doesn't walk the talk," Doria said of the owner of X. A 2023 data analysis by the technology information portal Rest of World said X had accepted 83% of government requests in its first six months under Musk's control. Musk has cited the need to comply with local laws in countries such as India.

"Just compare how he acted in Turkey in comparison to how he is acting in Brazil. When the Turkish asked him to block certain accounts [...] he blocks them and then he goes on Twitter and says: 'Well the option would be to block the entire country and I'm not doing that.'"

Sweden's 'queen of trash' on trial over toxic waste charges



▲ *Bella Nilsson, now named Fariba Vancor, arriving at court yesterday*

Miranda Bryant
Nordic correspondent

Eleven people, including an entrepreneur who once called herself the "queen of trash", have gone on trial in Sweden accused of illegally dumping toxic waste, in the country's biggest ever environmental crime case.

The closely watched trial at Attunda district court in Sollentuna, near Stockholm, centres on the recycling company Think Pink, its former chief executive, Bella Nilsson, and her former husband, Thomas Nilsson.

Prosecutors have accused the company of dumping and burying waste in 21 locations in Sweden in a way that could harm human health and the environment. All the defendants deny wrongdoing.

The case has been several years in the making and the trial is scheduled to take nine months.

Bella Nilsson was the last of the accused to arrive at the court yesterday. Wearing big sunglasses, she refused questions and pushed away reporters' microphones.

The Nilssons face charges of serious environmental crime and serious economic crime linked to Think Pink, all of which they deny. The other accused face a variety of charges focusing on alleged environmental and economic crime. From 2018-20, Think Pink's heyday, its trademark pink construction bags, offering cheap recycling and waste disposal, were a common sight in the capital. Nilsson won awards for her work.

The business came crashing down in 2020 when its owners were arrested. The company has been accused of dumping at least 200,000 tonnes of waste around Sweden.

Police investigators, whose report runs to 50,000 pages, found harmful levels of arsenic, dioxins, zinc, lead, copper and petroleum products. Several of the rubbish dumps caught fire, with one fire lasting for months.

Anders Gustafsson, one of the trial's three prosecutors, has described the case as "the largest environmental crime in Sweden in terms of scope and organisation".

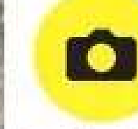
Yesterday he said Think Pink had dumped rubbish and used falsified documents to deceive authorities and make big profits. "There are claims for damages of 260m SEK [£19m], mainly from municipalities, when they were forced to clear away the large mountains of rubbish," he told broadcaster SVT. "It is exceptional that it is on a large scale and that it has been going on for such a long time."

According to the indictment, which covers sites across 15 different municipalities, the main suspects were involved in hauling thousands of tonnes of unsorted construction and demolition waste, which was then buried, wrapped in plastic in bales and used as filling material.

Nilsson, who has now changed her name to Fariba Vancor, previously told Swedish media the company obeyed the law, and said she was the victim of a plot by business rivals.

Additional reporting
Agence France-Presse





Pink wheels in Pakistan
Female police officers patrol a street in the city of Gujranwala yesterday as part of the recently launched Pink Wheels project that is being piloted to provide extra security for women.

PHOTOGRAPH: AFTAB RIZVI/GETTY

Irish PM 'angry' over €336,000 for parliament bike shelter

Shane Harrison
Dublin

Ireland's prime minister, Simon Harris, has said he is "angry and annoyed" at the "inexcusable" €336,000 (£283,000) cost for a bike shelter at Leinster House in Dublin, the seat of the Irish parliament.

The taoiseach told a news conference that people could see the benefit of having somewhere to park a bike at a workplace but did not understand "the extraordinary sum of money" the shelter cost, and neither did he.

His comments echoed those of the transport minister and former Green leader, Eamon Ryan – himself a cyclist – who said the project seemed to be "incredibly expensive".

The structure, which can accommodate up to 36 bikes, consists of a steel-framed canopy designed to be both long-lasting and to protect the bikes from the elements.

Kieran O'Donnell, the minister with responsibility for the Office of Public Works (OPW), which carried out the work, has requested an immediate review of the project.

An OPW spokesperson said the bike shelter "was procured via a framework agreement and complies with public procurement and planning guidelines", but cited the historic nature and setting of Leinster House as a major cost factor.

It said it "recognises the importance of ensuring that public money is spent transparently", but that the construction provided "several unique challenges" because Leinster House was a "protected structure of national importance".

Almost €284,000 was spent on the construction of the shelter and nearly €3,000 on archaeological services. VAT accounted for more than €38,000 and administrative costs including surveying came to nearly €11,000.

"The materials used, including Irish granite, glass and steel were carefully selected not only for their durability, but also for their compatibility with the historic setting of our national parliament," the OPW said.



▲ *The Irish parliament's bike shelter can accommodate up to 36 bicycles*

€38,000
Amount from the total accounted for by VAT alone, while €284,000 was spent on the shelter's construction

Village emerges from reservoir as Greece grapples with drought

Helena Smith
Athens

Nowhere is more indicative of plummeting rainfall levels in Greece than the Mornos reservoir, and no village more indicative of how serious this year's drought has been than Kallio, submerged by the artificial lake.

Nearly five decades after Kallio was flooded as part of the construction of a dam to ensure Athens' water supply, reserves have receded to the point that the village has reappeared.



◀ *The village of Kallio was flooded several decades ago in a bid to secure water supplies for Athens*

"It's a nightmarish situation," said Apostolos Gerodimos, the head of the 60-strong community forced to move upland when the dam was built about 125 miles west of Athens.

"The more water levels fall, the more buildings that were submerged back then are re-emerging. If it doesn't rain this winter the problem is going to get much worse."

About 80 buildings, including Kallio's church and primary school, were "sacrificed" when the reservoir was created in the late 1970s.

Local people, who were compensated, either chose to move to Athens and other urban centres or went uphill, where they formed a new community.

Although the contours of the church have not yet been revealed, the outlines of the stone building that once housed the school can now be seen because of falling water levels.

Kostas Koutsoumbas, the village's deputy mayor, reckons water levels "have fallen 40 metres" this year: "We haven't seen anything like it since 1993. It'll be more acute than even then if things don't improve."

In early July, the water utility company, Eydap, estimated that water levels were down 30% in the Mornos reservoir compared with the same period last year. Officials have said they were drawing up "special plans for better water management" with €750m of investments lined up.



▼ *Joe Biden with Kamala Harris in Pennsylvania. Drives to sow doubts about the electoral system have picked up since Biden quit the race*
PHOTOGRAPH: BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI/AFP/GETTY

Trump and his allies planting seeds for 'chaos and discord' if he loses, experts say

Peter Stone
Washington

Donald Trump and election denialist allies at Turning Point USA, True the Vote and other Maga stalwarts are spreading conspiracy theories about election fraud to lay the groundwork for claiming the election was rigged if Trump loses, warn election experts and some veteran Republicans.

The consequences of the strategy could be dire. John Giles, the Republican mayor of Mesa, Arizona, who spoke at the Democratic national convention in August in support of Kamala Harris's campaign for the presidency, said the former president and his allies "will throw everything at the wall and see what sticks", if Trump loses.

He added: "They'll claim everything went wrong if they lose. I'd be surprised if Trump doesn't try to foment insurrection."

Trump and his Maga allies have repeated falsehoods from 2020 about fraud due to voting machines and drop boxes. Now they promote conspiratorial attacks on federal and state prosecutors who filed criminal charges against Trump for trying to subvert his loss in 2020, and push baseless claims that non-citizens are poised to vote in large numbers.

Turning Point USA has pushed a multimillion-dollar drive to get out more votes for Trump in key swing states, while holding a few big rallies for Trump where bogus claims are made that the 2020 election was rigged, and new fears are being raised about potential fraud this year.

Trump and allies have spent months attacking "election interference" and "lawfare" to sully federal and state charges he faces over his multiple and aggressive efforts to block Joe Biden from taking office on 6 January 2021, a tactic that aims both to rally his backers and undercut the rule of law, experts say.

Trump has waffled about committing to accept the results of this year's elections as he did in his June debate with Joe Biden.

> *'He has no basis for claiming fraud and is perpetuating these lies as a plan B to disrupt democracy'*
>
> **Dave Trott**
> *Former congressman*

"If it's a fair and legal and good election - absolutely," Trump said after being asked three times if he would accept the results. But then Trump repeated a false claim that US elections are filled with fraud to justify his sprawling efforts to overturn his 2020 defeat. "I would have much rather accepted these - but the fraud and everything else was ridiculous."

This year false charges of sizeable voting by non-citizens have become commonplace in the Maga ecosystem. They are spurred in part by Trump and the House speaker Mike Johnson holding a press event at Mar-a-Lago in April on the topic that led the House to pass a bill to outlaw voting by non-citizens - even though it is already illegal and historically has been a tiny issue.

To drum up fears of non-citizen voting, True the Vote sent out a fundraising appeal in March that cited the group's efforts to "draft arguments for litigation" and other plans to thwart what it baselessly claims will be election "chaos" this year "by way of mass illegal voter registrations".

Election experts and Republican veterans say such efforts are harbingers for claiming the election was rigged if Trump loses.

Dave Trott, the former Michigan congressman and a Republican, said: "Trump continues to encourage his supporters like Charlie Kirk of Turning Point USA to question the integrity of our elections. He has no evidence or basis for claiming fraud and is only perpetuating these lies so he has a plan B to disrupt democracy in the event he loses."

Other critics and experts agree . "A lot of false claims are masquerading as efforts to change policy to improve election integrity when in actuality they're just designed to sow distrust in our system if Trump loses," said David Becker, who leads the Center for Election Innovation and Research. "This is all designed to manufacture claims that if Trump loses, the election was stolen and to sow discord, chaos and potential violence."

Trump has also attacked the vice-president baselessly for spearheading a "vicious, violent overthrow" of Biden to replace him as the party's nominee, and insinuated that Harris and Biden intentionally failed to provide proper security for his rallies that spurred the assassination attempt against Trump.

The drives by Trump and allies such as Turning Point USA to mobilise supporters to vote, and to sow doubts about the electoral system, started months ago but seem to have picked up since Biden dropped his re-election attempt and Harris became the Democratic nominee.

Kirk, Turning Point's founder and a far-right media star, used his radio show in February to attack the criminal charges Trump faces as a Democratic plot. "The regime couldn't beat Trump in a primary," according to an online promo for Kirk's show that featured Will Scharf, a Trump legal team member "So, to win in 2024, they're banking more and more on lawfare to save them".

Republican veterans say such rhetoric is intended to foment doubts again about the safety of the election system which they will exploit if Trump loses in November.

Given Trump's unending false claims about 2020 election fraud, the former Republican congressman Charlie Dent of Pennsylvania told the Guardian that if Trump loses: "I expect he will do the same thing in 2024. If he loses he will raise Cain in state capitals and he will descend on state capitals with his allies to make the case for fraud."

RFK Jr Former candidate was asked to join Republican ticket in July

Robert Tait
Washington

Robert F Kennedy Jr was asked if he would be vice-president under Donald Trump hours after the former president survived an assassination attempt in July, it has been revealed.

The startling proposal was made as part of a frantic bid to reach out to Kennedy, who was staging an independent bid for the presidency, in the name of "national unity" following the failed attempt by a lone gunman, Thomas Crooks, to kill Trump at a campaign rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, on 13 July.

Kennedy reportedly rejected the suggestion from Calley Means, an entrepreneur acting as an intermediary, according to the New York Times. But he later called Means back to say he would be prepared to talk to Trump.

The revelation is contained in a Times story exploring the rapprochement between two men who had previously been at loggerheads - and explaining how Kennedy, a former Democrat, came to abandon his presidential effort and endorse Trump.

The timing of Means' call appeared to be inspired by the fact that Kennedy's father, Robert F Kennedy, and his uncle, President John F Kennedy, had both been assassinated.

It is unclear whether Trump was genuinely considering choosing Kennedy as his running mate at that stage. Days later, at the Republican national convention in Milwaukee, he announced JD Vance as the vice-presidential nominee.

As recently as April - at a time when he was lambasting Kennedy as "a radical left Democrat" - Trump was apparently also considering him as his vice-president and musing about he liked the sound of a "Trump-Kennedy" ticket. His campaign even conducted internal polling on its electability, according to the Times.

Kennedy dismissed the idea, calling the vice-presidency "the worst job in Washington".

But Kennedy's return call on the night of Trump's near assassination led eventually to meetings between the pair and Kennedy's announcement on 23 August that he was suspending his campaign and endorsing Trump, who has since appointed him to his transition team.



▲ *Robert F Kennedy Jr with Donald Trump at a campaign rally in August*

'Like a punch' Jewish groups in Germany alarmed by AfD's rise

Ashifa Kassam *European community affairs correspondent*

As the decades passed, the group – made up of those who had survived the unthinkable horrors of the Holocaust – had slowly begun to rebuild their trust in Germany. Even as far-right movements gained strength in Hungary, France and Italy, many were certain that Germany had learned the lessons of its past.

That trust was shattered on Sunday after a far-right party won a German state election for the first time since the second world war, said Christoph Heubner of the International Auschwitz Committee, an association launched in 1952 by survivors of the Nazi concentration camp.

"For survivors, this result, obviously, is deeply depressing," he said. "They thought that Germany, after the experiences of the Holocaust, the rise of the Nazi party, the SS and everything, would be especially aware of the dangers of this ideology. And of people who are fond of this ideology and who try to bring it into politics and parliaments."

In the eastern state of Thuringia, the far-right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) emerged as the most voted-for party with nearly 33% of the vote, and in neighbouring Saxony it came second with almost 31%. Particularly worrying were exit polls suggesting that more than a third of voters between the ages of 18 and 24 in Thuringia had backed the AfD, said Heubner.

The AfD's leader in Thuringia, Björn Höcke, has twice been convicted of knowingly using the Nazi slogan "Everything for Germany" at political events. He has called for an "about-face" in Germany's culture of Holocaust remembrance and atonement.

Thuringia was where the Nazis had first won power in a German state government in 1930, going on to consolidate control in Berlin three years later.



◀ *Björn Höcke, the AfD's leader in Thuringia, used a Nazi slogan in his campaign; anti-AfD protests (below) were held in Erfurt in the state after exit polls on Sunday*
PHOTOGRAPHS: THILO SCHMUELGEN/ CHRISTIAN MANG/ REUTERS

Germany's Central Council of Jews criticised Sunday's election for offering up "populist pseudo-answers from radical parties". "The elections were like a punch to the country," said Josef Schuster, the council's president. "Can we recover from this blow?"

Polls had long predicted that the AfD would do well in the state elections, said Tarik Abou-Chadi, a professor of European politics at the University of Oxford. Even so, the number of voters who cast their ballots for a party known for its fierce rhetoric against immigrants, Muslims and other minorities had left him reeling.

"As a German citizen, a queer person of colour, it is simply devastating and frightening that, at very high turnout, over 30% support extreme-right fascists," Abou-Chadi wrote on social media.

These concerns have been exacerbated in recent years as support for the AfD rises, leading many mainstream politicians to harden their stance on migration, a response that seemingly has served to legitimise the AfD's narrative.

On Sunday, opposition to migration proved key not only to the AfD but also to the Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (BSW), the leftist-conservative party that emerged as a potential kingmaker.

The impact of this hardening discourse had already been noticed in Thuringia, where the AfD chapter, along with that in Saxony, have been designated as "rightwing extremist" by security authorities.

In the lead-up to the election, posters in Thuringia's cities and villages called for "summer, sun and remigration", the latter an allusion to mass deportation plans allegedly discussed by some AfD politicians. The campaign clashed with the state's reality of immigration levels that rank among the lowest in Germany.

The AfD has long sought to scapegoat migrants, said Maurice Stierl, at Osnabrück University's Institute for Migration Research and Intercultural Studies. But what had shifted was the willingness of mainstream parties to emulate this.

"What really worries me is the anger and hate that are being whipped up by both the radical right and parties of the supposed political centre," he said. "People of colour all over Germany feel abandoned and scared."



Grim details emerge at trial of man charged over his wife's multiple rapes

Agence France-Presse

Harrowing details emerged yesterday at the trial of a Frenchman charged with enlisting dozens of strangers to rape his drugged wife, with their daughter temporarily leaving the courtroom as she became overwhelmed by emotion.

The case against Dominique Pélicot, 71, has horrified France. The trial in the southern city of Avignon, due to conclude in December, is weighing rape charges against him and 50 other men who he allegedly recruited online to abuse his wife.

The wife, Gisèle Pélicot, is attending the trial, which she has asked be open to the public, as are their daughter and two sons.

Her lawyers say she was so heavily sedated she was not aware of the abuse that went on for a decade.

The presiding judge, Roger Arata, who leads a panel of five judges, read out the main findings of the investigation on the second day of the trial.

The allegations came to light on 12 September 2020 when a security guard apprehended Pélicot in a supermarket in the town of Carpentras for filming customers up their skirts. Condoms and a camera were found in his pocket. When questioned, Pélicot said he had "acted on impulses" that he had "not been able to control".

Police found a file labelled "abuses" on a USB file connected to his computer that contained 20,000 images and films of his wife being raped almost 100 times.

Their daughter, who uses the pen name Caroline Darian, left the room shaking and in tears less than 20 minutes into the hearing, after Arata recounted how naked photomontages of Darian had been found on Pélicot's computer in a folder titled "Around my daughter, naked". She reappeared 20 minutes later.

Gisèle Pélicot was reserved and calm throughout the proceedings. At the other end of the courtroom, but directly opposite her, sat her husband, listening intently. She has commenced divorce proceedings.

Darian in 2022 wrote a book about the effect of the discovery of the crimes on the family.

Eighteen of the accused including Pélicot are in custody, while 32 other defendants are attending the trial as free men. A 51st man is being judged in absentia. Besides Pélicot, there are 72 other suspects in the case but only 50 have been tracked down. Most face up to 20 years in jail for aggravated rape if convicted.

During searches investigators came across thousands of photos and videos showing Gisèle Pélicot being sexually abused by strangers recruited via an online forum that has now been shut down.

More than 100 people die trying to escape DRC's largest prison

Carlos Mureithi
Nairobi

More than 100 people were killed while trying to escape from a prison in the capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the early hours of Monday, the interior minister has said.

In a post on X yesterday morning, Jacquemain Shabani said 129 people had died and 59 others were injured in the escape attempt at Makala prison in Kinshasa, the country's largest.



▲ *Police officers outside Makala prison after the attempted jailbreak*

Twenty-four of those who died were killed by gunfire, while the others lost their lives in a crush during the chaos, he said.

He also said a fire broke out and destroyed the prison's administrative buildings, registry, hospital and food depots. Shabani said the situation was under control and investigations were taking place. A crisis meeting had been called with the heads of defence and security services.

He did not indicate how many inmates had escaped or attempted to do so.

Witnesses told Agence France-Presse they heard gunfire at about 2am on Monday and that it lasted for several hours in the prison area.

Daddi Soso, an electrician, said he had seen security force vehicles taking bodies away in the early hours.

Videos circulating on social media showed dead bodies on the ground, damaged prison buildings – some burnt out – and smoke coming out of the facility.

The DRC justice minister, Constant Mutamba, described the attempted jailbreak as "premeditated acts of sabotage" and said investigations were under way to identify and "severely punish" those who instigated it.

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Business



◀ *Keir Starmer at a windfarm near Grimsby when he was leader of the opposition. His government has pledged to triple clean energy generation by 2030, a goal for which the auction was seen as crucial* PHOTOGRAPH: ALAMY /PA

Clean energy auction secures enough power for 11m homes

Jillian Ambrose
Energy correspondent

Great Britain's renewable energy auction has secured enough new clean electricity projects to power 11m homes, after the government made record funding available to suppliers.

The £1.5bn auction will support 131 new projects including windfarms, solar farms and tidal power projects after ministers raised the funding available to seven times the sums offered last year.

The sixth auction of its kind is expected to bring forward a record-breaking amount of clean energy, at below the cost of running a gas power plant, by giving developers a guaranteed price for each unit of electricity they generate. This should eventually mean lower bills for consumers.

The success of the closely watched industry auction was considered crucial if the government hoped to achieve its election pledge to double onshore wind, triple solar power and quadruple offshore wind by 2030.

Labour increased the value of the auction by 50% compared with the funds promised by Conservative ministers. The move aimed to reignite investment in the UK's clean energy industry after the last government failed to award a single new offshore wind contract last year or remove the blocks on onshore wind.

However, yesterday's auction secured only half the offshore wind capacity needed every year for the rest of this decade if the government hopes to meet its green energy targets. Almost two-thirds of the new offshore wind capacity that was eligible to bid in the auction failed to bid low enough to secure a contract.

The bulk of the funding was awarded to 5GW of offshore windfarm capacity. The nine projects were awarded a lower than expected price of between £75 a megawatt-hour and £82/MWh in today's prices.

These prices are below the typical price of electricity in the wholesale power market (£84/MWh) - and well below the guaranteed price of for new nuclear plants (£128/MWh).

The auction also awarded contracts to about 90 new solar farms with a capacity of 3.3GW at a price of about £69/MWh, and 22 new onshore windfarms with a capacity of almost 1GW at a price of about £71/MWh.

Tidal power developers secured contracts for six new projects.

Ed Miliband, the energy secretary, said: "It is another significant step forward in our mission for clean power by 2030 - bringing Britain energy independence and lower bills for good."

Bond auction shows UK still a haven for investors

Phillip Inman
Graeme Wearden

The UK remains among the world's most attractive destinations for investors seeking a safe haven after an auction of government bonds was more than 10 times oversubscribed.

Matching a previous record set in June and illustrating the stability of the government's finances, Britain attracted £110bn of bids on bonds worth £8bn.

Considered the first big test of the Labour government's reputation with foreign investors, the bond sale showed there was a queue of fund managers ready to lend to the UK.

Some ministers were known to have been concerned that Liz Truss's mini-budget debacle and the dramatic increase in borrowing costs that followed had done irreparable harm to the UK's reputation on international money markets.

On Monday, the leader of the commons, Lucy Powell, said the UK might have suffered a run on the pound and an economic crash had it not imposed spending cuts when it took office, including removing winter fuel payments for millions of pensioners.

Powell said there was "no alternative" and the decision was needed to avoid an economic catastrophe - but she faced criticised for the claims.

The government borrowed £51.4bn in the financial year to July 2024. This was £500m less than during the same four months of the previous financial year, but £4.7bn more than forecast in March 2024 by the Office for Budget Responsibility, the Treasury's independent forecaster.

While this overshoot is expected to force Rachel Reeves to increase taxes or cut spending in her first budget next month to meet fiscal rules that she has kept from the previous Tory government to have debt falling as a share of GDP in five years, it is considered a relatively small deficit by investors.

Plans by the Bank of England to offload £100bn of its stock of UK debt, selling it on the open market over the next year, could complicate the situation by increasing the supply of bonds for sale.

However, the huge scale of the demand during the auction for UK debt - whereby pension funds and other institutions lend money to the UK government - appears to have allayed fears of an investor strike.

The chancellor has said that although spending will be tightly controlled in the budget, it would be "reasonable for the government to borrow to invest".

Former VW boss appears in court over Dieselgate scandal

Kate Connolly
Berlin

The trial into the "Dieselgate" emissions scandal, which first plunged Volkswagen into disrepute nine years ago, has opened, with the German carmaker's former chief executive in the dock for the first time.

Volkswagen was found to have falsified emissions tests that made its vehicles appear more climate-friendly than they really were.

Martin Winterkorn, who led VW for eight years until his dismissal in 2015 days after the rigging of software came to light, faces a range of charges in the trial in Braunschweig, northern Germany, all of which he denies.

The 77-year-old is accused of being aware of the rigging long before it was made public, supporting the manipulation, turning a blind eye to dealing with it, and trying to cover it up.

The scandal was being played out in court in the same week that VW announced it was contemplating its first factory closures in Germany, which could lead to the loss of thousands of jobs. It is seeking cost savings of billions of euros to deal with a mounting profit crisis caused by its slowness to shift away from fossil fuels, as well as compensation payments over the scandal, estimated to total €30bn (£25bn) worldwide.



▲ *Martin Winterkorn's appearance had been in doubt due to ill-health*

Winterkorn, whose poor health had cast doubt over whether his trial could go ahead, appeared solemn as he entered court in yesterday morning. He told reporters and photographers he was "doing very well".

According to a 600-page indictment, he faces a range of charges, including fraud and market manipulation as well as providing illegal false testimony before a 2017 parliamentary committee into the Dieselgate affair, which rattled markets and was deemed to have damaged Germany's reputation for high quality products.

His lawyer, Felix Dörr, told the court: "Our client did not defraud or harm anyone."

Business view
Nils Pratley



The blades are turning again – but Miliband's renewables target looks optimistic at best

It was a "record-setting auction" and "a significant step forward in our mission for clean power for 2030", trumpeted the energy secretary, Ed Miliband, enjoying the contrast with last year's auction flop under the Tories in which precisely zero bids were received to build offshore windfarms.

Miliband was claiming credit when it wasn't entirely due, of course, because this year's competition was designed well before the election. Some version of success was guaranteed from the moment the last government said it was prepared to pay up to £73 a megawatt hour (in 2012 prices, confusingly) for offshore wind, a mighty leap from the £44 level that produced no takers in 2023. Developers were bound to come out to play again.

But Miliband is right about the return of a feel-good vibe around renewables, which may owe something to his vote of confidence in the contracts-for-difference (CfD) regime as an effective price-discovery mechanism for renewables. The winning bids for offshore wind settled at £54/MWh and £58/MWh (again in 2012 numbers), better than expected.

Even when one converts the numbers to today's prices, to get £75/MWh and £82/MWh, that equates to a shade under the current wholesale electricity price of £84/MWh. The lovely low prices of 2022 aren't coming back, but offshore wind remains a credible workhorse of a renewables-heavy power system.

But here's the qualification: Miliband's target of having 60 gigawatts of installed offshore wind capacity by 2030 is still a long way from being credible. Just do the back-of-the-envelope arithmetic: there is about 15GW of capacity operating today; add the projects commissioned in yesterday's auction, plus those under construction, and you still only get to a total of about 27GW. Getting to 60GW by 2030 – all of it operational – looks a stretch.

"More action is needed to stay on track with ambitious 2030 targets," says energy consultancy Aurora. You bet. The next two auctions would have to secure 28GW of capacity between them and next year's budget for offshore wind would have to be doubled to £2.5bn, thinks LCP Delta.

One big constraining factor here is supply chains. The UK is not alone in pushing hard to add offshore capacity, and most of the kit is sourced in competitive international markets. It is welcome news that Japanese firm Sumitomo Electric is building a £350m subsea cable manufacturing plant on the Cromarty Firth, but few blades and turbines are produced domestically. It is not easy to accelerate meaningfully the pace of rollout of windfarms – and, critically, the rate at which they are connected to the grid.



▲ *Turbines off Walton-on-the-Naze, Essex. The goal of 60GW by 2030, all operational, will need more action*

The government knows that, of course, thus Miliband indicated that he is working on plans to expand the CfD system and "other energy policies" to get more renewables connected sooner. But, at this stage, that is merely a hint that contracts could be signed outside the existing renewables set-up, whether via GB Energy or some other vehicle.

Regulator poised to slash refunds to fraud victims

Rupert Jones
Kalyeena Makortoff

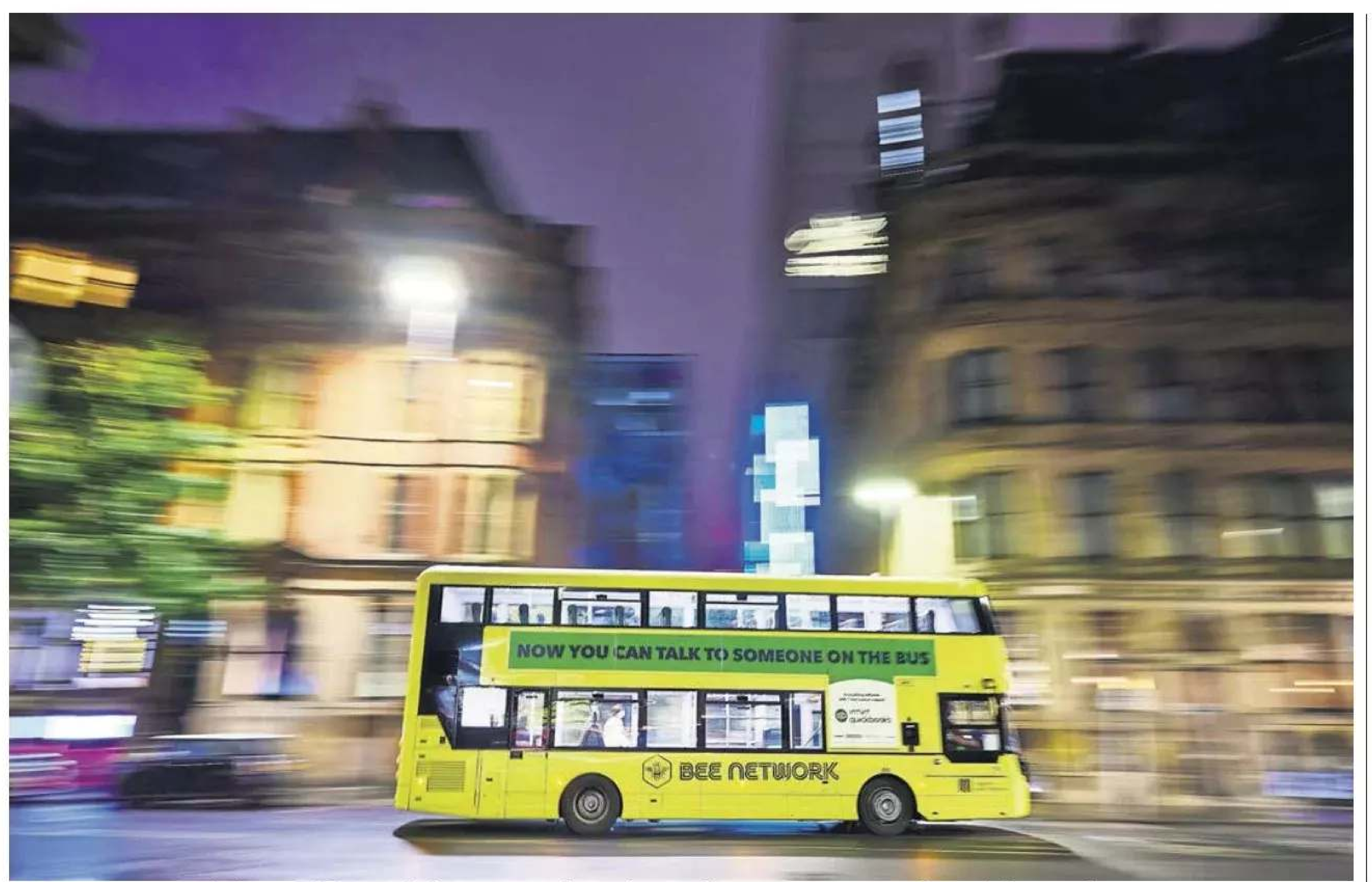
The UK is reportedly poised to slash the planned maximum amount that banks will have to refund to fraud victims, from £415,000 to around £85,000, after lobbying from lenders, fintechs and some politicians.

At the end of last year, the Payment Systems Regulator (PSR) said it was "leading the way globally" on combating fraud and could confirm that "the maximum level of reimbursement per claim will be set at £415,000", with the new regime coming into force on 7 October this year.

But as that date has got nearer, there have been reports that dozens of companies have been lobbying the regulator to slash the threshold.

It is understood an announcement by the PSR is due to be made today.

Yesterday the Financial Times reported that the regulator was set to dramatically scale back its measures. The FT said the maximum fraud payout was now expected to be set at £85,000.




PHOTOGRAPH: CHRISTOPHER THOMOND/ THE GUARDIAN

Ticket to ride A night bus passing through Manchester city centre in the early hours of yesterday after a 24-hour bus service across Greater Manchester was launched. Its distinctive yellow Bee Network buses will cater for late-night visitors and it aims to provide transport for healthcare, hospitality and distribution centre shift workers, with all fares capped at £2.

Rolls-Royce engine problem is found on 15 Cathay Pacific jets

Julia Kollewe
Jasper Jolly

Cathay Pacific has said it identified 15 Airbus A350 aircraft that need component replacements after a part failed on one of its Rolls-Royce engines minutes after takeoff from Hong Kong on Monday.

A second carrier, Singapore Airlines said yesterday it was also inspecting the engines of its Airbus A350s "as a precautionary measure".

Cathay Pacific said it expected to cancel 34 return flights through to today, when it would also provide details of any further service cuts for the rest of the week.

Cathay said it had inspected its fleet of 48 Rolls-Royce-powered A350s and had identified 15 aircraft with engine components that needed to be replaced. Three had been repaired and it expected all affected aircraft to resume flying by Saturday.

Rolls-Royce confirmed the affected aircraft were powered by its Trent XWB-97 engines, and said it was keeping other carriers informed. Authorities in Hong Kong have launched an investigation, and Rolls-Royce said it was also working closely with them and Airbus.

Singapore Airlines said there had not been any impact so far on its schedule. A spokesperson said: "As a precautionary measure [Singapore Airlines] is inspecting the Rolls-Royce Trent XWB-84 engines that power our Airbus A350-900 fleet."

The news of the engine failure drove shares in Rolls-Royce on the London Stock Exchange down 6.5% on Monday, the biggest faller on the FTSE 100 index. Its shares partly recovered yesterday and were up by 3%, making the UK manufacturer the top riser on the FTSE.

Data from the tracking service Flightradar24 showed other airlines flying the A350-1000 appeared to be operating as normal yesterday.

The top six Airbus A350 operators are Qatar Airways with 24 planes, British Airways with 18, Cathay Pacific with 18, Virgin Atlantic with 12, and Etihad Airways and Japan Airlines with five each.

A spokesperson for Qatar Airways said there has been "no impact on the operation of any Qatar Airways Airbus A350-1000s", but added that "we are continuing to monitor any developments". The other airlines have been approached for comment.

Japan Airlines said it had asked Rolls-Royce for more information. "If the engine manufacturer takes any further action we will respond accordingly," a spokesperson said.

Cathay Pacific has not specified which engine component failed but said it was the "first of its type to suffer such failure on any A350 aircraft worldwide".

Airbus said it was in contact with Rolls-Royce and Cathay Pacific and offering full technical support.

What next?

What was the problem with Cathay Pacific's engines?

Cathay Pacific flight CX383 took off from Hong Kong on its way to Zurich, Switzerland, on Monday. However, shortly after take off, one of the two Rolls-Royce engines on the Airbus A350-1000 failed. The plane was forced to circle for over half an hour, dumping fuel before landing safely back at Hong Kong. The affected component was a fuel nozzle inside the Trent XWB-97 engine, according to Reuters.

What happens now?

Cathay Pacific, which operates 48 A350s, has said that 15 new jets need a replacement part.

What could the implications be for Rolls-Royce?

The key question is how widespread the problem is. Rolls-Royce, which makes the engines in Derby, earns much of its money from fees related to engine flying hours, so groundings can be costly.

Tufan Erginbilgiç, Rolls-Royce's boss, has overseen an astonishing appreciation in Rolls-Royce's market value - up nearly fivefold to £39bn - since taking over at the start of 2023. As well as cutting management jobs, he has achieved this increase in part by charging airline customers more.

Any extended issues would be an unwelcome return to past form for Rolls-Royce. It suffered billions of pounds of extra costs on its Trent engines because of cracks in the blades at the centre of the Trent 1000 models fitted to the Boeing 787 Dreamliner. Rolls-Royce's share price slumped by 6.5% on Monday, but rebounded by 2% yesterday, after Cathay indicated the issue would be resolved by the weekend.
Jasper Jolly


▲ *Some Airbus A350s have been grounded while parts are replaced*

John Lewis to develop flats to rent in Reading as it diversifies beyond retail

Sarah Butler

The owner of John Lewis has submitted plans for the £80m development of 215 flats for rent on the site of its unused Reading distribution centre - a tenth of which will be affordable.

The John Lewis Partnership (JLP), which owns Waitrose supermarkets as well as its eponymous department stores, said the site would feature two garden spaces, including one for children, and shared communal space for fitness, home working and socialising.

If plans are approved, construction is expected to start in 2026 and residents could move in by 2028. The vast majority of the funds invested in the project will come from John Lewis's partner, the finance group Abrdn.

Katherine Russell, the director of build-to-rent for JLP, said: "We have worked closely with Reading council's planning officers, local residents and organisations to propose a scheme that will benefit residents and the wider community by transforming a disused industrial site into a thriving rental community.

"By revitalising brownfield land we have a fantastic opportunity to provide a significant number of homes which can help alleviate some of the growing pressure on Reading's housing market. These will be homes not only developed by us but managed by us, meaning we can offer quality service and a guarantee that homes will not be sold off, as so often happens in the rental market."

The move to develop the site opposite Reading's Oracle shopping centre is part of the group's aim to diversify its income beyond retail into homes for rent and offering financial services.

In 2021, John Lewis pledged to build and rent out about 5,000 homes and manage another 5,000 as part of bold plans to generate 40% of profits from outside retail by 2030. Earlier this year, the 40% target was ditched with the group's chair, Sharon White, blaming the economic climate.

JLP was recently granted planning permission to transform a Waitrose site in Bromley, south London, into more than 300 homes for rent. The group is appealing to the planning inspectorate as negotiations with the local council on a plan to build more than 400 homes above another supermarket site in west Ealing - including one 19-storey block - have dragged on amid some local opposition.

The latest commitment comes just a few weeks before the arrival of John Lewis's new chairman, Jason Tarry, the former Tesco executive who is expected to put extra focus on turning around retail performance.

Tarry arrives just as the group begins to rev up expansion after several years of cost cutting.

Advertisement

Turmeric+ 'A great product that really works' says Martin.

Yacht master instructor and former footballer, Martin Musgrove, 62, tells how Turmeric+ changed his life.


'I began to notice I felt more like my old self after taking Turmeric+'

'I was a professional footballer before becoming a yacht master instructor and always loved to run.

'I used to love to keep fit running but unfortunately I had to hang up my running shoes twelve years ago.

'It was my daughter who does triathlons who recommended I take turmeric two and a half years ago. I was pretty sceptical, but she ordered Turmeric+ on my behalf and it popped through my letterbox so I thought I would give it a try.'

Turmeric contains compounds called curcuminoids, the most notable of which is curcumin. Not only is curcumin responsible for turmeric's distinctive yellow colour but it's also what makes it such a powerful spice.

However curcumin is difficult for the body to absorb so the scientists at FutureYou Cambridge used a patented Curcuma Phospholipid Complex formulation to make Turmeric+, 30 times more absorbable than standard turmeric.

They also added vitamin C, which contributes to normal collagen formation for the normal function of cartilage and vitamin D, which contributes to the maintenance of normal bones and maintenance of normal muscle function.

'My knees felt uncomfortable when I went to bed at night and in the morning I usually struggled to walk around easily, until they warmed up a little bit.' Martin explained,

'I began to notice I felt more like my old self after taking Turmeric+, so much so that six months down the line I wanted to see if I could do a little walk, jog, walk, to see if my knees could cope.

'They felt OK and I thought maybe I could do a little running as I really missed it.

'That was twenty months ago. The rest is history. I run 25K a month and I can run 5k in 30 minutes. I do park runs and local runs. My aim is to do a 10K run.'

'Our advanced formulation works by using plant- based lecithin to mimic the way the body naturally absorbs curcuminoids after eating turmeric cooked with fat,' explains Dr Miriam Ferrer, PhD, Head of Product Development at FutureYou Cambridge. 'But it delivers far more than you'd normally get from a meal.'

Martin continues; I've recommended Turmeric+ to friends, and they can see the difference in me. It may not work for everyone; but as far as I'm concerned it's a great product that really works.

Trial **Turmeric+** for just £5

Leading Cambridge company offering scientifically proven joint supplements for £5.



FutureYou Cambridge is offering you the chance to trial its premium joint health product, Turmeric+, for just £5.*

The offer is aimed at helping those who commonly suffer with joint health issues. Turmeric+ has received numerous positive reviews since its launch, becoming the company's best selling product.

'I used to suffer with great discomfort in my knees and neck, particularly when going up and down the stairs.' says Jacqui Hunter, 60, who runs her own event management consultancy for the medical and pharmaceutical industries and enjoys yoga, golf, gardening and travel.

'It certainly improved my flexibility and mobility dramatically and I've recommended it to lots of my friends. When you find something that works for you, you want to help others too.'

'It certainly improved my flexibility and mobility dramatically'

HOW TO CLAIM YOUR £5 PACK

To claim your 28 day Turmeric+ subscription trial worth £20, visit

FutureYouOffers.co.uk

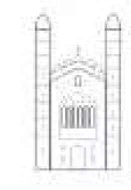
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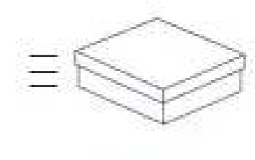
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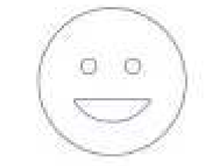
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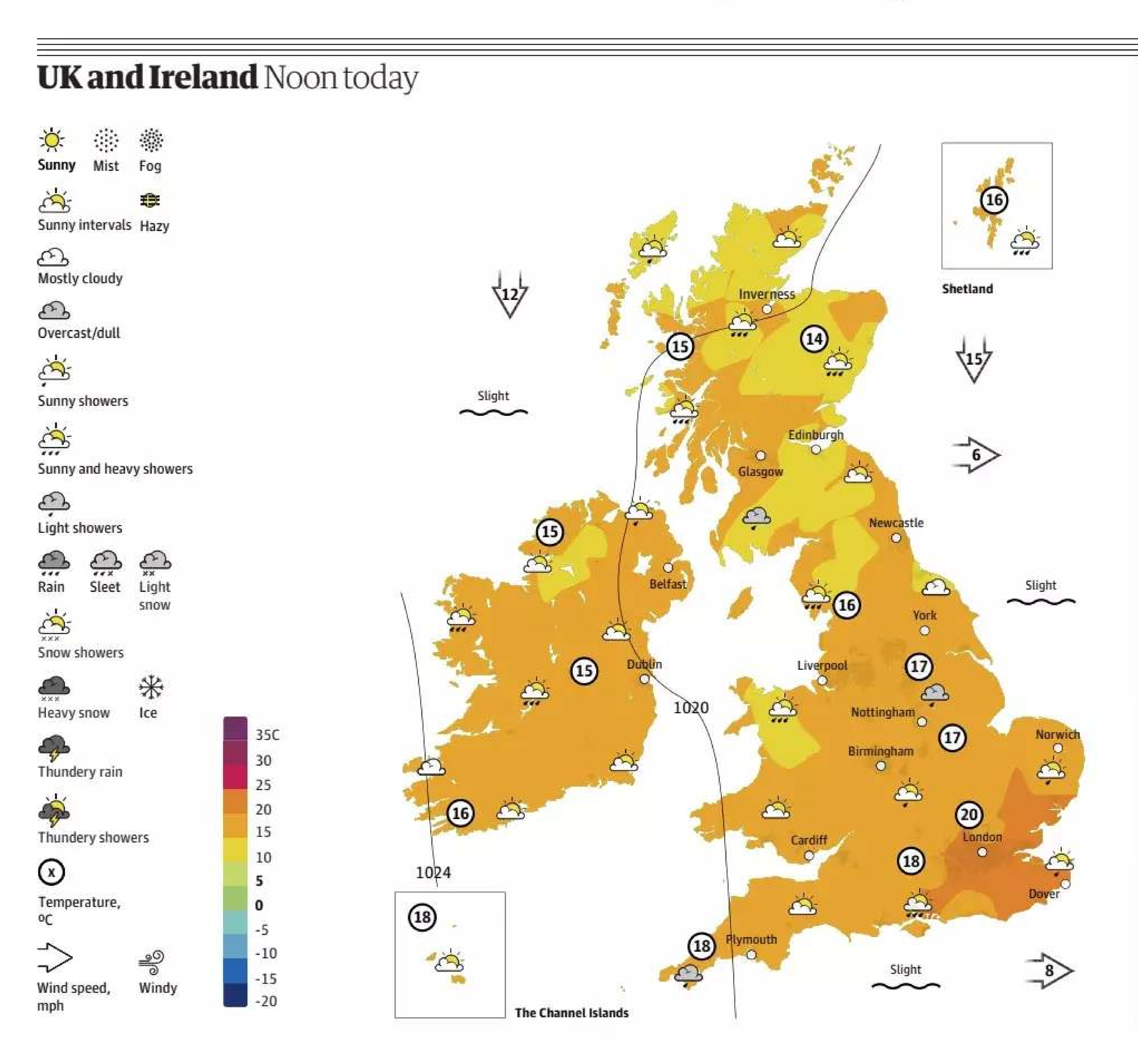
EXCELLENT
Over 11,500 reviews



***Turmeric+ contains vitamin C which contributes to normal collagen formation for the normal function of cartilage and bones. Vitamin D contributes to the maintenance of normal muscle function.** Introductory offer valid for new UK customers only. Offer expires 31st October 2024 and cannot be used in conjunction with any other promotions. Cancel any time, without obligation. See FutureYouHealth.com/TUT393 for full terms and conditions.

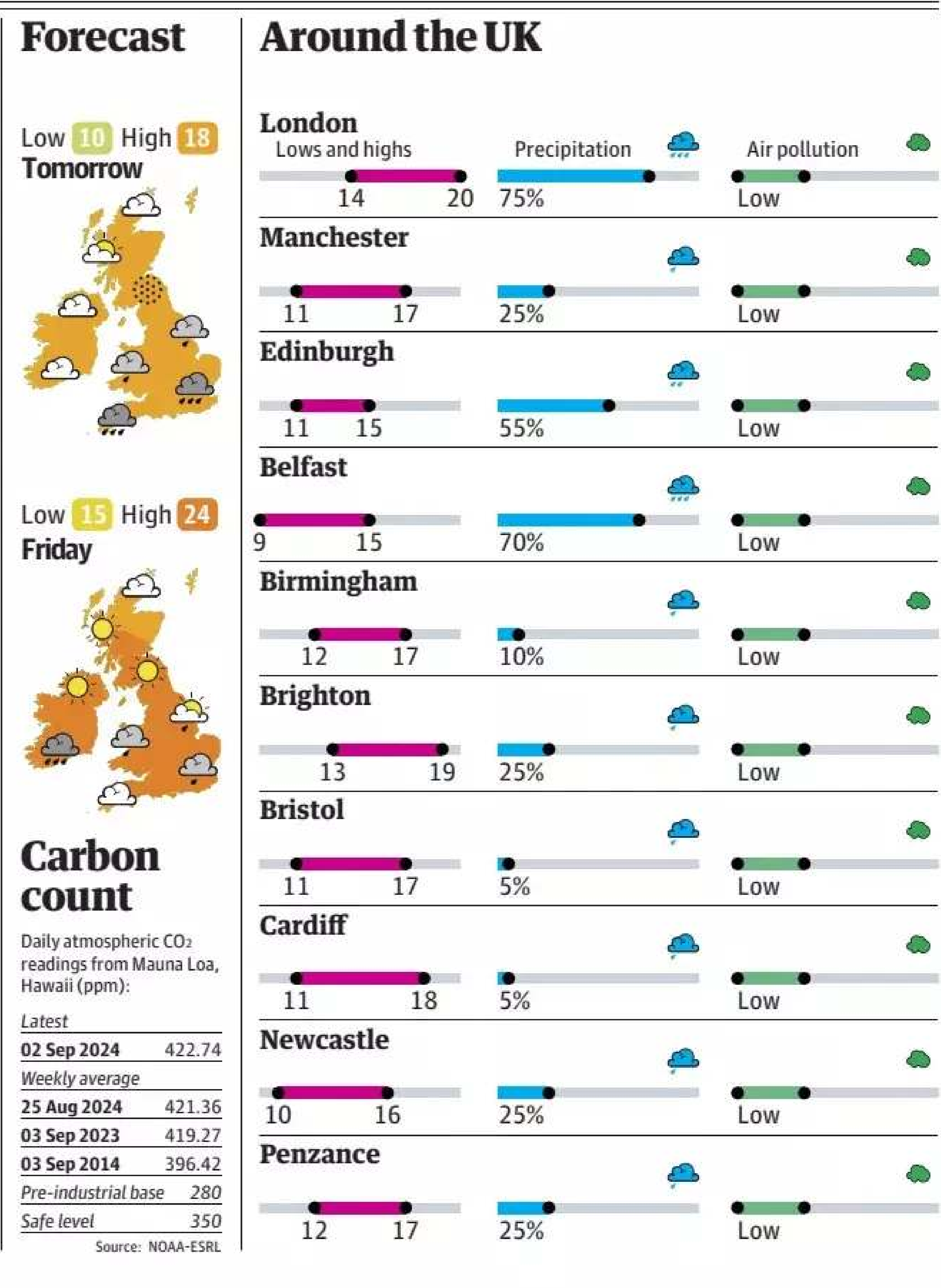
Weather
Wednesday 4 September 2024

UK and Ireland Noon today



Forecast

Around the UK



Carbon count

Daily atmospheric CO_2 readings from Mauna Loa, Hawaii (ppm):

Latest	
02 Sep 2024	422.74
Weekly average	
25 Aug 2024	421.36
03 Sep 2023	419.27
03 Sep 2014	396.42
Pre-industrial base	280
Safe level	350

Source: NOAA-ESRL

Atlantic front

Cold front

Warm front

Occluded front

Trough

High tides

Aberdeen	0248	4.3m	1515	4.0m
Avonmouth	0902	12.6m	2115	12.8m
Barrow	0050	9.0m	1312	8.7m
Belfast	0037	3.5m	1302	3.0m
Cobh	0706	3.9m	1923	4.0m
Cromer	0800	5.1m	2032	4.8m
Dover	0048	6.4m	1258	6.6m
Dublin	0054	4.0m	1317	3.7m
Galway	0655	4.9m	1906	5.0m
Greenock	0154	3.5m	1434	3.1m
Harwich	0124	3.9m	1335	3.9m
Holyhead	--	--	1203	5.3m
Hull	0751	7.3m	2019	7.0m
Leith	0412	5.4m	1630	5.3m
Liverpool	0034	9.1m	1253	8.9m
London Bridge	0337	6.8m	1550	6.8m
Lossiemouth	0121	4.1m	1348	3.8m
Milford Haven	0756	6.7m	2009	6.8m
Newquay	0646	6.7m	1859	6.8m
North Shields	0455	5.0m	1721	4.8m
Oban	0729	3.9m	1934	4.0m
Penzance	0618	5.2m	1832	5.4m
Plymouth	0728	5.2m	1936	5.4m
Portsmouth	0046	4.4m	1317	4.6m
Southport	0015	8.8m	1234	8.6m
Stornoway	0828	4.5m	2032	4.8m
Weymouth	0743	1.1m	1948	1.3m
Whitby	0531	5.5m	1756	5.3m
Wick	0045	3.5m	1310	3.2m
Workington	0056	8.1m	1315	7.9m

Sun & Moon



Sun rises	0618
Sun sets	1938
Moon rises	0734
Moon sets	2007
First Quarter	11 Sept

AccuWeather.com

Forecasts and graphics provided by **AccuWeather** ©2024

Lighting up

Belfast	2008 to 0640
Birm'ham	1947 to 0625
Brighton	1938 to 0621
Bristol	1949 to 0631
Carlisle	1955 to 0626
Cork	2013 to 0653
Dublin	2007 to 0642
Glasgow	2003 to 0631
Harlech	1957 to 0634
Inverness	2005 to 0626
London	1938 to 0619
M'chester	1950 to 0626
Newcastle	1951 to 0621
Norwich	1935 to 0613
Penzance	1959 to 0644

Specieswatch

The book scorpion, *Chelifer cancroides*, is a tiny beast but it is hard to think of another creature that is such a friend to humankind. It eats book lice, ants, mites, clothes moths and bedbug larvae - pests that most people would not welcome in their homes.

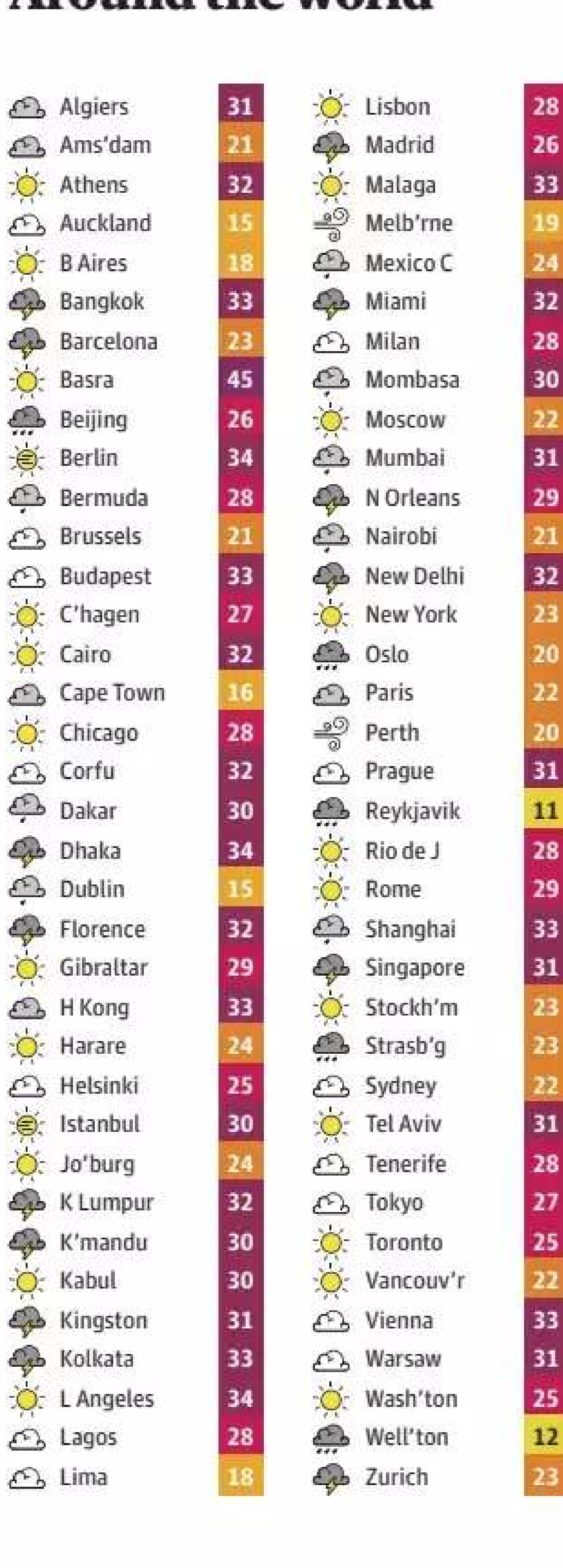
It looks like a scorpion but kills its prey with venom stored in its claws, not its tail, and is closer to a spider in origin. It has eight legs and is also known as a false scorpion.

It is mostly unnoticed because it is only 2-8mm (0.08-0.31in) long and hides from the light, hunting at night. The book scorpion is said to have been first spotted by the Greek philosopher Aristotle when the tiny creatures were in his library. They were chomping up the book lice that were destroying his precious volumes by eating the vegetable glue that held the pages together.

There are at least 3,300 species worldwide. They live close to human habitation among leaf litter and in our homes when there is a food supply, but are completely harmless to humans. They are in the news because scientists recently analysed their venom and realised it kills bacteria resistant to antibiotics, so perhaps in the future they will be an even greater ally.

Paul Brown

Around the world



Algiers	31	Lisbon	28
Ams'dam	21	Madrid	26
Athens	32	Malaga	33
Auckland	15	Melb'rne	19
B Aires	18	Mexico C	24
Bangkok	33	Miami	32
Barcelona	23	Milan	28
Basra	45	Mombasa	30
Beijing	26	Moscow	22
Berlin	34	Mumbai	31
Bermuda	28	N Orleans	29
Brussels	21	Nairobi	21
Budapest	33	New Delhi	32
C'hagen	27	New York	23
Cairo	32	Oslo	20
Cape Town	16	Paris	22
Chicago	28	Perth	20
Corfu	32	Prague	31
Dakar	30	Reykjavik	11
Dhaka	34	Rio de J	28
Dublin	15	Rome	29
Florence	32	Shanghai	33
Gibraltar	29	Singapore	31
H Kong	33	Stockh'm	23
Harare	24	Strasb'g	23
Helsinki	25	Sydney	22
Istanbul	30	Tel Aviv	31
Jo'burg	24	Tenerife	28
K Lumpur	32	Tokyo	27
K'mandu	30	Toronto	25
Kabul	30	Vancouv'r	22
Kingston	31	Vienna	33
Kolkata	33	Warsaw	31
L Angeles	34	Wash'ton	25
Lagos	28	Well'ton	12
Lima	18	Zurich	23



Sarah Storey begins the pursuit of her 18th gold medal

Sport

Today


Weather
21°

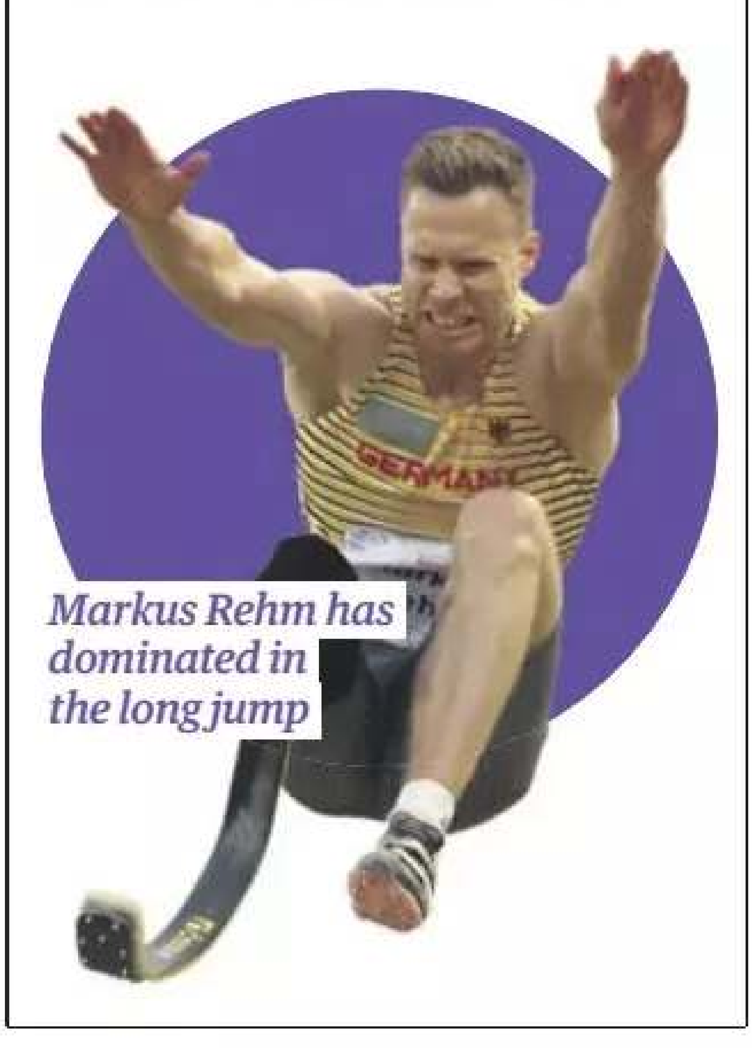
Highlights

7am
Storey time

It's Dame Sarah Storey day! Britain's most decorated Paralympian – with 28 Paralympic medals, of which an astonishing 17 are gold – Storey takes aim at No 18 at the age of 46. So great is her longevity that her first medals came at Barcelona 1992 … in a different sport. Having taken a glut of swimming silverware, Story switched her attention to two wheels in 2005 and has not looked back. She completed the double of C5 time trial and C4-C5 road race in 2012, 2016 and in Tokyo, and begins her bid for a quadruple double in the time trial today. But Storey is not the only GB cyclist with designs on gold today – fresh from their time in the velodrome, the rest of the squad emerge on to the road too. Also keep an eye out for the USA's Oksana Masters, who has been to six Paralympic Games in four sports (rowing, cross-country skiing, biathlon and road cycling) and won 17 medals, and her teammate Travis Gaertner, making his cycling debut in USA colours after wheelchair basketball gold with Canada in 2000 and 2004.

11am
Lapthorne eyes revenge

The GB pairing of Andy Lapthorne and Greg Slade are in the final of the quad doubles today but standing in their way is a formidable obstacle in the shape of the Netherlands' Niels Vink and Sam Schröder. They are familiar foes to Lapthorne, who was on the losing side against the Dutch pairing in the quad doubles in the French Open final at Roland Garros this summer.



Markus Rehm has dominated in the long jump

11.10am
Netflix star Vio in action

Beatrice "Bebe" Vio lost both arms and legs after a severe bout of meningitis at the age of 11 in 2008. Four years later the Italian was a torchbearer at London 2012 – representing future Paralympians – and she has since gone from strength to strength. Foil gold medals followed at Rio 2016 and Tokyo 2020, she was one of the stars of Netflix's Rising Phoenix documentary series, and her exploits are watched by 1.3 million Instagram followers. Gold No 3 is on the cards today, with the finals at 7.30pm.

4pm
Bringing the power

The powerlifting begins today, with GB's Zoe Newson competing in the women's up-to-45kg category and hoping to pick up a third Paralympic medal. After bronze in London and bronze in Rio there was an agonising fourth-place finish in Tokyo. She bounced back from that with victories in the Commonwealth Games and the European championships but was fourth last year in the world championships. Guo Lingling, who took gold in Tokyo and has won the past four editions of the world championships in this category, is the overwhelming favourite.

7.25pm
Rehm revs up

Now 36, Germany's Marcus Rehm goes in search of a fifth Paralympic gold, at the Stade de France, having dominated in the long jump in London, Rio and Tokyo (and thrown in a 4x100m relay win in 2016 too). "The Blade Jumper" has an extraordinary record, and took T64 long jump gold in the 2023 world championships in Paris (at the slightly smaller-scale Stade Sébastien Charléty) with a leap of 8.49m. He still has designs on breaking the 9m barrier. On the track look out for GB's Sammi Kinghorn, who already has two silver medals from these Games and has every chance of another medal in the T53 100m.

Today's TV

Live Channel 4 8am-6pm and 6.30pm-9.30pm
Highlights
Channel 4 10.30pm

Crowds have delivered but para-sport needs to be seen all year round

Ade Adepitan



Ahead of these Games, one of the things we were all worried about was whether they'd have the crowds. Whether Paris could deliver that same energy and enthusiasm we remember from London. I think we now know the answer. On Monday I was at the SH6 para-badminton final between Krysten Coombs and Charles Noakes, and it was like: wow. There were 7,000 people there, they were raising the roof, they were singing the Marseillaise, they were on their feet waving flags when their guy came in, they had giant pictures of his head.

I have to say, I really felt sorry for Coombs. He came into this cauldron of noise where all the warmth was for the French athlete and I could see he was thinking: "How do I manage the crowd?" That's something we're not taught as Paralympians. Often our sports are just not played in front of big crowds. The Paralympics is only every four years and even then, in the past, when you played in front of crowds they just cheered for everyone. Now you go to places and they don't care if a guy's a Paralympian or disabled, if he's not from their country, if he's not on their team, that guy's getting booed.

Coombs went out aggressive, he went for every shot, diving and scrambling all over the floor and you could sense that was the only way he felt he could deal with it. But then there came a moment when he won a point and he turned to the crowd gesticulating as if to say, "come on, give me more" and the crowd, well, there was suddenly this tidal wave of boos. He looked shellshocked. And the irony of the whole thing is that his opponent was born in Sidcup!

I just wanted to go out there and give our guy a hug. But that's the beauty of sport, I guess. I think Coombs had a realisation: "Not only have I got to beat my opponent, I've also got to beat this crowd." And it's virtually impossible unless someone plays the picture-perfect game. You've got to have absolute belief in your ability and iron will and focus to be able to drown out all the noise and believe. That's another level of mentality, and that's where Paralympians probably need to get to now; you will see next-level athletes as a result.

So well done to the French. In terms of crowds and atmosphere at these Paralympic Games, I definitely think they have delivered. They have really embraced it and a round of applause for what they've done. But I also think I understand what Jonnie Peacock was getting at when he said, after his race on Monday night, that coming up to Paris "we've let the Paralympics die".

What I believe he's alluding to is that the Paralympics is the shop window. This is the crème de la crème, if you want to have a French analogy. But this showcase doesn't mean anything unless we bring the sport along in the intervening years. Para-sport needs to be seen by people all the time. It needs to be shown on TV alongside non-disabled sport. So when you're showing the Premier League, show blind football. When you're showing NBA basketball, show the wheelchair basketball. When you're showing the swimming and the athletics, there should be para-sport races too. It has to be on all the time. It's an impossible mission otherwise, we are delaying the progress of the sport if we expect the Paralympics to carry it and to carry people on for another four years.

> *This showcase doesn't mean anything unless we bring the sport along in the intervening years*

Fair play to Jonnie calling out Sebastian Coe and calling out the Diamond League and the IAAF. They have to show some leadership and start putting on the events, but the media has to be in conjunction with them and the governing bodies too; people in the IPC and ParalympicsGB. It needs people in those organisations who understand the nature of TV and entertainment and who are willing to work with them, because some of our events are raw, the depth isn't there yet, and we need people who are willing to make the tweaks to make the sport entertaining.

Many of the sports are already ready for prime time, but we're at this disadvantage because not enough people know about our sport, not enough people know about our athletes, and we have to work a little bit harder. But I believe that if we do that we're going to create a product that will be far superior to every non-disabled product out there because we've got a lot more to offer.

Just look at some of the events at the athletics this summer. The high jump for me has been a standout. I sit here as a Paralympian watching it and I think: "How could someone with one leg, just hop along and literally jump over something the height of a door frame? How does someone with a prosthetic leg, someone like the new American star Ezra Frech, go and do these incredible jumps?" It's jaw-dropping.

It's like that saying: a dog is for life, not just for Christmas. Disability sport is for life, not just for the Paralympics. That's where we should be, that's the mentality, and we should be looking at ourselves and saying; we've got a great product, but how can we make it even more entertaining?



◀ *Krysten Coombs (right) was booed by French fans as Charles Noakes won their badminton final*
STEPH CHAMBERS/GETTY IMAGES



Veteran Jefinho shines as Brazil maintain 20-year unbeaten run

South American side enter blind football semi-finals after 0-0 draw with China

Paul MacInnnes
Stade Tour Eiffel



◀ *China and Brazil players embrace after the final whistle*
TOM JENKINS/ THE GUARDIAN



▼ *Brazil's Jeferson holds off Ruiming Zhu of China*
TOM JENKINS/ THE GUARDIAN

Maybe it's the venue. The Stade Tour Eiffel caught the eye of the world during the Olympic Games and is no less picturesque now as summer has turned to autumn. Maybe it's that French *folie*, and the desire of the Parisian crowd to kick up a noise whenever they get an opportunity. Or maybe it's just that blind football, or *cécifoot* as they call it here, is an action-packed sport that thrills as much as it astonishes. Whatever the reason, it's quite the Paralympic ticket.

In front of a full house last night the qualification rounds reached their climax with two matches to decide Group A. It was the hosts France against Turkey, but first Brazil, the titans of this sport, against China, the dominant country in parasport full stop.

The straightforward fact of the matter is that Brazil have never lost in Paralympic competition since blind football was added to the roster of official sports at Athens in 2004. They remain undefeated still, but only just, and by the finest of margins. It required a scrambled save from their sighted goalkeeper Luan Gonçalves to claw the ball off the line in the last second to keep the record going.

China gave as good as they got in this game, and had the standout player in Ruiming Zhu who combined directness and a keen shooting instinct with an ability to ride the physical knocks that come as standard in this sport.



▲ *China's goalkeeper Huachu Xu saves at the feet of Brazil's Tiago*

For Brazil, whose stars include the remarkable Jefinho, now 34 but still able to pick out teammates 20 yards away with a lofted pass, and the star striker Nonato, whose solo goal to win gold in Tokyo went deservedly viral, there was a sense that energies were being reserved for later in the tournament, almost to their cost.

Blind football requires that every player wear a blindfold to equalise visibility amongst the outfield players to zero. Instead the two key senses are sound and touch. The ball is filled with bearings so that it rattles, coaches can issue directions from varied points on the sidelines, players must vocally warn each other (by saying "voy") before pounding into another full body-to-body challenge.

As for touch, it's simple: when you get the ball the aim is largely to keep it.

This makes for a sport where dribbling is king and of course the Brazilians are brilliant at it. But there are various ways to skin an opponent. Jefinho is an elegant runner, gliding past challenges in the manner of the Brazilian Ronaldo. His teammate Tiago, a forward (in a five-a-side team, Brazil started the match with four of them), is more of a Diego Costa; he'll run with the ball and through you at the same time.

It's the close control and the ability to ride challenges that help to make blind football a compelling spectator sport. Certainly the crowd appreciated it. Fans are supposed to stay quiet during play but involuntary "oohs" came up from all corners of the arena when Jardiel spun his way past the attention of three Chinese players in the second half. There were also a fair few "eeks" on the numerous occasions when players were knocked brutally to the ground.

The requirement for quiet makes for a different stadium dynamic and one that French organisers have used to create a special atmosphere. Whenever play is broken up, as it often is during the two 15-minute halves, a master of ceremonies will demand noise which a pent-up crowd are happy to deliver. Similarly, at half-time, the noise is unrelenting but requires the MC to bring it down again, almost singing the crowd a lullaby as a raucous Mexican wave softens slowly into a silent ripple.

A deserved enthusiasm for the Brazilians and Chinese duly turned up a notch or five when the French team took to the field. Every break in play meant a chorus of "Allez Les Bleus" and, to be fair, one child shouting "Turkiye". As well as the Mexican wave there was a wave of noise too, as the aluminium bleachers were stamped on from one stand to the next.

When the host side opened the scoring with a driven shot by Frederic Villeroux the non-existent roof went off in a more traditional style. France won 2-0 and they will progress to the semi-finals alongside Brazil where they will play Colombia and the world champions, Argentina, respectively.

Baker beams with dressage bronze after son's birth

Tanya Aldred
Château de Versailles

Umbrellas are not supposed to be brought into the equestrian arena – they startle the horses. But the Games volunteers at the gates allowed some flexibility as the morning rain hurtled down and the spectators perched in the open-air stands opened their parapluies and hunched underneath, the teachers herding troupes of back-to-schoolchildren cursing their luck.

Natasha Baker, who won bronze in the grade-three individual dressage event on Dawn Chorus (known as Lottie) was one of the unlucky ones who rode before the deluge cleared, her test done with the huge gardens of Versailles behind her unrolling to a palace half-hidden by a damp shroud.

Her gloves still wet from the morning deluge, she came away from her afternoon medal ceremony thrilled after a year out of the saddle after the birth of her son, Joshua, in 2023. He sat beside her on the mobility scooter playing with the medal – the ninth of Baker's Paralympic career.

"I'm so happy," she said. "It's the most amazing feeling. I didn't come here hoping or expecting a medal, this is for the other mums in the world to show that you can still have a baby and follow your dreams.

"I was very naive going into the whole pregnancy, coming back from it and everything. I don't think you really know what's going to happen until you're in that situation. And my pregnancy was harder than I imagined it would be. I knew it would be a challenge physically. But it is such an unknown."

It has been a mixed summer for British equestrianism. On the eve of the Olympics, a video emerged of Charlotte Dujardin whipping her horse 24 times. Then came the news that Lee Pearson, Britain's third most successful Paralympian, was unavailable for selection because of a suspension and investigation into his conduct. In between, at the Olympics, came gold medals in the team equestrianism and show jumping, an individual bronze in the eventing and a dressage team bronze.

Baker was dismissive when asked whether Dujardin's actions had smeared dressage. "It is clear to see here, and in the Olympics, that there are such amazing bonds, such trust, we love our horses so, so much. Especially in para-dressage, we are trusting our horses with our lives.

"I am pretty useless physically so I am putting all of my trust in Lottie and she loves me as much as I love her. Just because one situation has happened does not mean we are all doing the same thing."

Britain's second bronze was taken by Georgia Wilson (in the grade two tests), on her chestnut mare Sakura. Wilson, who won two bronze medals at Tokyo after a late call-up, said the rest of the world was catching up with Britain, who have been dominant at previous games. "The whole sport has grown. The competition is really high, which is exciting."

Baker, Wilson and Mari Durward-Akhurst (who made her Paralympic debut on Athene Lindebjerg and finished sixth in the grade-one individual event) have qualified for the freestyle competitions on Saturday.



▲ *Natasha Baker, on Dawn Chorus, won her ninth Paralympic medal*

Para equestrianism is not only 20km south-west of Paris, but a different world to the clamour of the velodrome or the sweat and violence of wheelchair rugby. The playing field is a toy-town arena, with mini white fences, the judges sit inside mushroom huts assessing, in percentages, how in harmony horse and rider are.

Sometimes, a friendly horse stands to the side, brought in to reassure the competing animal that all is well. Everyone is immaculate from the knotted manes and jauntily brushed tails of the horses to the beaded bun nets and crisp ironed jackets of the humans.

There is something else, a thread, that weaves between the potential power of the horses, between the riders, whose lives out of the saddle are not always easy, and between the quiet of the crowd who show their respect with silent applause, that makes the whole shebang incredibly moving.

Rogers swims to gold for Britain after horror crash

Faye Rogers completed the journey from Olympic hopeful to Paralympic swimming champion by powering to gold in Paris three years since the car crash which changed her life.

The 21-year-old edged out her ParalympicsGB teammate Callie-Ann Warrington to scoop the S10 100m butterfly crown in a British one-two at La Défense Arena.

Rogers took part in Olympic selection trials for Tokyo in 2021 before seriously injuring her right arm in September of that year while driving to training. Having sustained several open fractures, a dislocated elbow and a severed ulnar nerve, she was told by doctors that her competitive swimming career was over.

"It's been an absolute whirlwind, the last three years," Rogers said. "It's been a massive journey. I couldn't be prouder of where I've come from and how I've got here. Being told you're never going to swim competitively again, as someone whose life revolved around swimming, that was really, really difficult.

"Getting into para-swimming has been amazing. It's honestly been a lifesaver for me. I don't think I'd have coped with the accident and my impairment without being able to swim. I couldn't be more grateful."

The world champion Rogers was fastest ahead of Warrington by 1.31sec in the heats but trailed her compatriot at the halfway point of the final. The biochemistry student, from Stockton-on-Tees, battled back to touch the wall in 1min 5.84sec – taking the title by just 0.57sec.

The Maidstone-born Warrington clocked a personal best of 1min 6.41sec as she held off the challenge of the Canadian Katie Cosgriffe.

It was a day to remember for the wheelchair racer Sammi Kinghorn, who secured her second silver of the Games in the women's T54 1500m. The 28-year-old Scot clocked 3min 16.1sec at the Stade de France, 2.91sec slower than the Paralympic record set by the Swiss gold medallist Catherine Debrunner. Kinghorn claimed GB's first athletics medal of the Games by finishing second in the T53 800m on Sunday.

"Who would have thought a sprinter would get a medal over 1500m? I certainly did not," she said. "I thought I'd be jostling for fourth. It was all pretty exciting. I got a bit disorientated and I stopped at 200m to go because I thought we were done – it's so loud in here which we're not used to. So I learned I need to count laps. I'm absolutely buzzing to come away with a medal."

Great Britain's men booked a wheelchair basketball semi-final showdown against Germany with an 84-64 win against Australia.

Ben Fox topscored for the Tokyo bronze medallists by shooting 26 points in the quarter-final at Bercy Arena, while Gregg Warburton and Lee Manning chipped in with 22 and 21 respectively. Britain defeated Germany, whom they face tomorrow, 76-55 in their opening group match.

Great Britain last reached the final at Atlanta in 1996, which ended in defeat against Australia. "It is about time we got ourselves back there," Fox said.

The British wheelchair fencer Piers Gilliver won a late-night silver following defeat in the final of the men's category A sabre. Gilliver, the reigning epee A champion, was beaten 15-8 by Germany's Maurice Schmidt at Grand Palais. The 29-year-old overcame the Italian Matteo Dei Rossi 15-8 and Ukraine's Artem Manko 15-14 to reach the gold-medal bout on the opening day of fencing action in France.

Meanwhile, following a retrospective disqualification, Zac Shaw was awarded the bronze medal in the men's T12 100m. The British sprinter finished fourth in the race on Saturday evening in a time of 10.94sec. Serkan Yildirim, of Turkey, was initially awarded the final podium place. **PA Media**

Medal table

		Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
1	China	53	40	22	115
2	Great Britain	30	18	13	61
3	USA	20	22	11	53
4	Brazil	14	11	23	48
5	France	11	12	15	38
6	Italy	10	8	17	35
7	Ukraine	9	15	21	45
8	Australia	9	9	14	32
9	Netherlands	9	5	4	18
10	Uzbekistan	6	4	4	14



▲ *Faye Rogers led home a British one-two with Callie-Ann Warrington*
ADAM DAVY/PA



◀ *Jack Draper has not lost a set on his way to the quarter-finals*
MARK GREENWOOD/IPS/SHUTTERSTOCK

Tennis *US Open*

Draper senses opportunity to hit next level

Briton seeking to overturn three-game losing run against De Minaur with a semi-final place the prize

Tumaini Carayol
Flushing Meadows

A couple of days after sealing his first career grand slam win, at Wimbledon, in 2022, a 20-year-old Jack Draper earned himself a rare chance to test his level against one of the sport's rising stars over the best of five sets.

The early returns from his second-round bout on No 1 Court with Alex de Minaur were encouraging. Despite the 67 ranking places and three years separating them, they went blow to blow as equals and were level after the two tight, gripping sets.

The intensity of their exchanges, however, left a significant mark on the young challenger and Draper spent the remainder of the match panting and hunching over as he faded in the last two sets. Between his undeniable raw talent and the physical problems that eventually hampered him, the match was a perfect reflection of Draper's early development.

They will meet again in the quarter-finals of the US Open today, perhaps the biggest match of their careers. In a draw that has provided numerous upsets and early exits, with the third seed, Carlos Alcaraz, losing early in their section, there is no top player to conquer en route to the final four. This is a massive opportunity for both of them.

Even though De Minaur has embraced a more offensive playing style, taking the ball earlier and beefing up his forehand to impose himself on the top players, he will again aim to extend the exchanges, to wear Draper out and test all of the physical problems the young Briton has struggled with repeatedly since his emergence.

After so many injuries and absences, it has taken an admirable amount of work for Draper to build himself into an athlete capable of competing with the best. He must now show how far he has come, particularly against an opponent who has won all three of their encounters.

Despite reaching his first grand slam quarter-final without dropping a set, Draper repeatedly describes his run here as feeling strange. He is understandably not pleased with his first-serve average of 53%, but he has been incredibly clutch, saving 20 of 21 break points and losing his serve once, repeatedly stopping opponents from building any momentum.

Against a player and returner like De Minaur, he will clearly need to land more first serves and sustain aggression with his forehand. Draper has shown how well rounded his game is, mixing tidy net forays and serve and volley attempts. He will need them to keep De Minaur off balance and break down his defences.

Draper is an incredibly ambitious figure who strongly believes he can be a top player and spend most of his career competing for the biggest titles. But it has taken some time for him to gain that deep confidence.

Before the quarter-finals, he reflected on a career that included two periods when he seriously considered quitting. The first occurred as he began on the lowest rungs of the pro circuit.

"When you're younger, you have all these big dreams of winning Wimbledon and all these types of stuff," he said. "Then you come out the juniors and you're into the grind, you're into the 15Ks, the challengers.

"It's crazy. You have to go to all these hard places to play and beat men. And it's really difficult. It's not the strawberries and cream of Wimbledon that I expected.

"It was a real grind for a few years, getting my head around the nature of the tennis world and how hard I'm going to have to work to be a top player and the travel and the sacrifice."

After resolving to fight and beginning his rise, Draper's doubts overwhelmed him again in 2022 at the height of his various physical problems. He had nearly lost all faith in his body and its ability to withstand the rigours of being a professional.

"I thought, with all my injuries that I was having and the hard times I was going through, whether, again, I was going to be good enough to sustain being the top player I wanted to be because I didn't want to be a player who wasn't going to be a top player."

All those struggles only strengthened his resolve and these moments, battling on the biggest stadiums deep in a grand slam tournament, are precisely what he has been working towards.

It will be fascinating to see whether he is truly ready to take his opportunity and push even further forward.

Fritz finds form

Taylor Fritz was rewarded for his courage in the most important match of his career so far as he marched into a grand slam semi-final for the first time in his career on home soil at the US Open, toppling Alexander Zverev, the fourth seed, 7-6(2), 3-6, 6-4, 7-6(3). In a tournament that has completely opened up following early defeats for Novak Djokovic and Carlos Alcaraz, Fritz will face either the ninth seed, Grigor Dimitrov, or his compatriot Frances Tiafoe, seeded 20th, who played each other late last night. Regardless of the outcome, there will be a first-time grand slam finalist this year in New York. Emma Navarro continued her breakout run in New York, the city of her birth, as the 23-year-old followed up her win against Coco Gauff by defeating another former top-two player, Paula Badosa, 6-2, 7-5 to reach her first grand slam semi-final. Tumaini Carayol

Results

Paralympics

ATHLETICS

Women: T54 1500m: 1 C Debrunner (Swi) 3:13.10; **2** S Kinghorn (GB) 3:16.01; **3** S Scaroni (US) 3:16.68. **Selected others: 7** E Rainbow-Cooper (GB) 3:22.09; **8** M Woods (GB) 3:23.37

SWIMMING

Women: 100m Butterfly – S10: 1 F Rogers (GB) 1:05.84; **2** C-A Warrington (GB) 1:06.41; **3** K Cosgriffe (Can) 1:07.22

Women: 100m Freestyle – S3: 1 L Smith (US) 1:28.81; **2** M Fernandez Infante (Sp) 1:30.04; **3** R Watson (Aus) 1:38.92. **Selected others: 4** E Challis (GB) 1:42.75

EQUESTRIANISM

Individual Dressage Grade I: 1 R Snikus (Lat) 79.167; **2** R Trunnell (US) 78.000; **3** S Morganti (It) 74.625. **Selected others: 6** M Durward-Akhurst (GB) 71.792

Individual Dressage Grade II: 1 F Howard (US) 76.931; **2** K Kristensen (Den) 73.966; **3** G Wilson (GB) 73.414

Individual Dressage Grade III: 1 R Hart (US) 77.900; **2** R van der Horst (Neth) 76.433; **3** N Baker (GB) 73.167

WHEELCHAIR TENNIS

Men: Doubles: Quarter-final: A Hewett & G Reid (GB/GB) bt M Ter Hofte & R Spaargaren (Neth/Neth) 6-2 6-1

Football

BRISTOL STREET MOTORS TROPHY

Northern: Group A Accrington 1 Stockport 4. **Group B** Port Vale 2 Wolves U21 2 (Port Vale won 5-4 on pens). **Group C** Carlisle 1 Nottm Forest U21 2; Wigan 1 Morecambe 2. **Group D** Barrow 2 Bolton 3; Fleetwood 2 Aston Villa U21 3. **Group E** Blackpool 4 Crewe 1. **Group F** Doncaster 2 Huddersfield 1. **Group G** Lincoln 0 Chesterfield 1. **Group H** Bradford 2 Newcastle U21 2 (Newcastle U21 won 4-3 on pens). **Southern: Group A** Birmingham 1 Walsall 1 (Walsall won 4-3 on pens). **Group C** Bromley 3 Cambridge Utd 3 (Bromley won 5-4 on pens). **Group D** Gillingham 1 Peterborough 2. **Group E** Leyton Orient 1 Arsenal U21 2. **Group G** Exeter 2 Swindon 1. **Group H** Newport 1 Cheltenham 2

SPFL TRUST TROPHY

Third round Hamilton 4 Dundee United II 0

Tennis

US OPEN (Flushing Meadows, New York)

Men: Singles: Fourth round: J SINNER (It, 1) bt T PAUL (US, 14) 7-6 (7-3) 7-6 (7-5) 6-1; **A DE MINAUR** (Aus, 10) bt J Thompson (Aus) 6-0 3-6 6-3 7-5; **T FRITZ** (US, 12) bt A ZVEREV (Ger, 4) 7-6 (7-2) 3-6 6-4 7-6 (7-3)

Women: Singles: Fourth round: I SWIATEK (Pol, 1) bt L SAMSONOVA (Cz, 16) 6-4 6-1; **B HADDAD MAIA** (Br, 22) bt C Wozniacki (Den) 6-2 3-6 6-3

Men: Doubles: Third round: N SKUPSKI & M VENUS (GB, NZ, 8) bt T Boyer & E Nava (US/US) 3-6 7-6 (7-3) 6-4. **Quarter-finals: M PURCELL & J THOMPSON** (Aus/Aus, 7) bt M GRANOLLERS & H ZEBALLOS (Sp/Arg, 1) 7-6 (7-4) 6-4; **T PÜTZ & K KRAWIETZ** (Ger/Ger, 10) bt A MOLTENI & M GONZALEZ (Arg/Arg, 16) 6-7 (11-13) 6-4 6-1

Women: Doubles: Third round: A Danilina & I Khromacheva (Kaz/Rus) bt T Mihalikova & O Nicholls (Svk/GB) 6-4 6-4. **Quarter-finals: L KICHENOK & J OSTAPENKO** (Ukr/Lat, 7) bt I Khromacheva & A Danilina (Rus/Kaz) 7-6 (7-2) 6-4; **K SINIAKOVA & T TOWNSEND** (Cz/US, 3) bt L STEFANI & D SCHUURS (Br/Neth, 8) 6-2 6-3; **Zhang S & K Mladenovic** (Chn/Fr) & E PEREZ & N MELICHAR-MARTINEZ (Aus/US, 5) 7-6 (7-2) 6-4

Mixed Doubles: Quarter-finals: S ERRANI & A VAVASSORI (It/It, 3) bt HSIEH SW & J ZIELINSKI (Tpe/Pol, 7) 6-3 6-4; **TC Grant & A Kovacevic** (US/US) bt E Perez & S Gille (Aus/Bel) w/o

Cricket

VITALITY BLAST

Quarter-final The Oval Durham 162-8. Surrey 164-5 (DP Sibley 67, SM Curran 52). Surrey beat Durham by five wickets.

Cycling

VUELTA A ESPAÑA (Spain)

Stage 16 (Luanco - Lagos de Covadonga, 181.5km): **1** M Soler (Sp) UAE Emirates 4hr 44min 46sec; **2** F Zana (It) Jayco-AlUla +18s; **3** M Poole (GB) dsm-firmenich PostNL +23s. **Selected others: 18** A Yates (GB) UAE Emirates +04:38

Overall standings: 1 B O'Connor (Aus) Decathlon AG2R La Mondiale 65h 09m 00s; **2** P Roglic (Svn) Red Bull-BORA-hansgrohe +3s; **3** E Mas (Sp) Movistar +1:25. **Selected others: 11** A Yates (GB) UAE Team Emirates +5:20

Fixtures

Football

Women's Champions League

First round: Semi-finals: (selected) Arsenal v Rangers (7.30pm); KuPS v Celtic (10am); Twente v Cardiff (6pm); ZNK Mura v Glentoran (3pm)

Cricket

First Men's Twenty20 International

Scotland v Australia, The Grange (2pm)

Vitality Blast

Quarter-final Sussex v Lancashire, Hove (7pm)

Greg Wood's racing tips

Lingfield **1.40** Lewis Barnes **2.10** Red Cloud **2.40** Cathedral **3.10** Northern Ruler **3.40** Thoughtful Gift **4.15** Valadero **4.50** Split Elevens **5.25** Newfangled

Bath **2.02** Wrestling Revenue **2.32** Miss Gitana **3.02** Atherstone Beau **3.32** Snow Berry **4.05** Glamorous Express **4.42** Ciara Pearl (nap) **5.17** Galactic Glow (nb)

Southwell **2.23** Secret Of Love **2.53** Placeholder **3.23** Minstrel Knight **3.55** Bearaway **4.28** Cock And Bull **5.03** Miakoda **5.38** Al Khawssaa **6.08** Stanley Spencer

Hamilton **4.35** Milford **5.10** Makalu **5.45** Airspeed **6.15** Catherine Chroi **6.45** Tafsir **7.15** Fiscal Policy **7.45** Jaminoz

Kempton **6.00** Goblet Of Fire **6.30** Russian Crescendo **7.00** I Maximus **7.30** The Fingal Raven **8.00** Crimson Angel **8.30** Ashariba **9.00** Havana Touch

Analysis

Simon Burnton



McCullum's big challenge is to replicate upbeat Test vibe in the white-ball sides

At the end of the final Test of the summer, against Sri Lanka starting on Friday at the Oval, Brendon McCullum will go home to New Zealand for what is being called a short break. The calm before the storm. In the 25 months since his appointment as head coach of England's red-ball side – they have played eight more Tests than anyone else – he has spent plenty of time there, striking a balance between feet up at home and feet up on Test ground balconies. All that is about to change.

England's schedule – as he and Rob Key, England's managing director of men's cricket, referred to in announcing the Kiwi's new dual role yesterday – eases slightly next year from a situation that has slipped the wrong side of ludicrous: August is only just over, but the next time England go as long as 48 hours without having a senior squad on duty it will be Christmas week.

Though 2025 will be calmer England will play nine Tests, at least 20 one-day internationals (more if they perform well at the Champions Trophy) and a dozen Twenty20s. They will visit India, Pakistan, Ireland, New Zealand and Australia and host West Indies, India and South Africa. The following year starts with the final two Ashes Tests, a six-game white-ball series in Sri Lanka and a T20 World Cup, all done and dusted by the first week of March. It would take extraordinary commitment for anyone to oversee it all.

Though it is only just over two years since Key decided to split the England coaching job in two, the possibility of one man taking charge of every senior fixture has come to seem almost impossible.

In practice that is how it may remain: there is surely a chance McCullum will be the first England coach for whom attendance at every match is not compulsory. His job, after all, is not really to provide tactical or technical analysis, to direct field placings or to pinpoint useful matchups. His task is to create a positive environment. As Ben Stokes, his Test captain, said: "He is all about making everyone feel, in his words, 10 feet tall."



▲ *Brendon McCullum is unlikely to oversee England's every game*
TOM JENKINS/THE GUARDIAN

He sees his role as being to challenge orthodoxies. Why should training sessions be compulsory? Why can't a Test team score at five an over? Why should our opening batter have the same approach as all the other opening batters? More than anything, why does everyone take everything so seriously?

"I always felt when playing that everything was based around the cricket and sometimes you forgot to enjoy yourself," he said in February 2023. "We want an environment where you want to turn up to work, have a good time, be the best version of yourself, push the boundaries of what you're capable of. That's our focus."

In 2022, when McCullum was appointed to lead a failing red-ball team and the Australian Matthew Mott got the job of guiding a white-ball squad that was enjoying a period of unprecedented success, it was clear which of those groups most badly needed an injection of positivity. Two years later, the tables have turned: performances and results in the longest format have massively improved, while in the past 10 months they have meekly surrendered the 50-over and T20 World Cups.

The fearlessness Eoin Morgan fostered in the white-ball group has evaporated since he passed the captaincy to Jos Buttler, with calamitous results. It will take more than a dose of good vibes to reverse that decline – those two tournaments had a succession of very obvious tactical missteps – but the most pressing challenge is to change the mood. As Key sought to replace Mott it was obvious that what the squad most needed was for someone to do precisely what McCullum does. His task then was to persuade McCullum to do it.

> *His job is not to provide tactical analysis. His task is to create a positive environment*

Contract signed, the 42-year-old said: "Rob Key's vision for the future of English cricket is something that really resonated with me." Job done.

There had been a widespread assumption McCullum would leave England behind when his contract expired at the end of thee Ashes tour next winter. Now it extends past the 2027 home Ashes to the end of that autumn's ODI World Cup.

What England have gained most of all is certainty: for all that this appointment hopefully presages a change of mood in the white-ball group, it also, and no less importantly, postpones the moment when the red-ball team will be forced to endure one.

'Idea of unified coaching made perfect sense'

Continued *from back page*

Trophy in Pakistan. "I've thoroughly enjoyed my time with the Test team and I'm excited to extend my role to include the white-ball sides," McCullum said.

"This new challenge is something I'm ready to embrace and I'm eager to work closely with Jos [Buttler, England's white-ball captain] and the team to build on the strong foundations that are already in place.

"Rob Key's vision for the future of English cricket is something that really resonated with me. The idea of a unified coaching structure, especially with the schedule easing next year, made perfect sense.

"The talent within English cricket is immense and I'm looking forward to helping these players reach their full potential. My goal is to create an environment where everyone can thrive and where we can continue to compete at the highest level across all formats."

Lord's will host the World Test Championship final next June. India and Australia, who met in the 2023 final at the Oval, lead the standings but England could still qualify should they extend their unbeaten run on this winter's tours to Pakistan and New Zealand.


◀ *The England head coach, Steve Borthwick, has licence to hand out up to 25 enhanced contracts*
JOE ALLISON/RFU/GETTY IMAGES

Rugby union

English game's bold new era set to bring hope and trepidation

Amid the likely triumphalism at Twickenham, concern still remains over how club and country matters will dovetail

Gerard Meagher

English rugby's bold new era appears set to belatedly begin. Nearly 12 months since the Rugby Football Union chief executive, Bill Sweeney, bullishly said that English rugby was "on the cusp of something spectacular" the time has arrived to demonstrate why. The much vaunted Professional Game Partnership is set to be unveiled, the agreement that governs how club and country coexist and cooperate, but amid the triumphalism we can expect at Twickenham today, there is trepidation too.

These eight-year agreements are not easy to formulate but that said, progress has been painstaking of late. There is a degree of cynicism from within the Premiership that it has taken until a few weeks before the season begins for clarity to emerge, and concerns that negotiations with players over their enhanced contracts have hit roadblocks along the way. "Slow, slow" was how Ellis Genge described the progress only a couple of weeks ago.

Perhaps cynicism should be set aside for now. Just a couple of years into the previous agreement, Sweeney's predecessor was moaning it was too expensive. Two years ago, Sweeney said "everyone is fed up" with the existing structure - a damning indictment of the state of the game in England - and he has made it his priority to improve it. It was not by coincidence that Simon Massie-Taylor, with whom he worked at the British Olympic Association and the RFU, became Premiership Rugby's chief executive and a deal has been thrashed out.

It is set to be worth around £33m a year to the clubs - a significant uplift on the previous deal - and will give England a greater degree of control over their players. Steve Borthwick has license to hand out up to 25 enhanced contracts, worth a guaranteed £160,000 per player per season - rather than the previous £25,000-a-match appearance fees - and has more of a say over strength and conditioning and medical decisions for all 50 members of the elite player squad.

The rub is that there is nothing that officially gives Borthwick final say over when a player appears on a given week, nor in what position they might feature. The players are happy in theory with the security the new deal will provide but there have been concerns of late the RFU cannot afford to give out all 25 contracts. If lingering issues remain they must be resolved as a priority.

The general mood in the Premiership is somewhere between cautious optimism and apprehension. An acknowledgment that the occasions when friction will occur are likely to be few, at the same time that some friction is inevitable. Ultimately, the final say rests with the club but as Exeter's Rob Baxter said recently, "the crux to it is that S&C [strength and conditioning] and medical decisions will be made by the England head coach. Selection for Premiership and European Cup games will be made by the club's DoR [director of rugby]. It doesn't take a great deal of working out to go: 'Well, if you are in control of someone's medical decisions, you're deciding when they play really, aren't you?'"

> ***The general mood in the Premiership is somewhere between cautious optimism and apprehension***

Clearly the first priority is for Borthwick to do something about the empty desks in England's strength and conditioning department. The exits of Aled Walters and Tom Tombleson have come at a bad time because the successful management of players' seasons requires trust and in-built relationships between those responsible for strength and conditioning, for medical decisions for club and country.

Moreover, it requires more planning than is realistically possible in a sport with an attrition rate like rugby's to plan a player's game-time across a season. All the more so when squad sizes have shrunk across the league. There is a maximum of 28 matches a club could play this season and England players are supposed to be unavailable for only two. There are nine England matches, meaning a potential of 35 fixtures with a British & Irish Lions tour to follow. It is understood the players are determined to avoid a repeat of last season which saw Maro Itoje exceed the threshold of playing minutes.

The clubs might argue it should not always be them to bear the brunt, and that players should also rest on England's time, though the RFU would no doubt point to the £33m it is paying the clubs. Like Baxter, Northampton's director of rugby Phil Dowson has his concerns. "You sometimes get guys who need an injection on a joint and that might need a week or two weeks off," he said. "If that is just before the Six Nations starts, does he miss the last [club] game for Saints to be available for England? If you start taking players out because you are saving them, effectively, to play for England, then that becomes an issue. I don't think conflict will happen very often, but it's interesting to see whom they appoint to arbitrate how that goes."

It is a view that largely reflects those around the Premiership and when speaking to officials across the league the phrase that comes up most is that "the proof will be in the pudding". You get the sense that most would settle for solid progress, let alone spectacular.

Study finds concussion risk outweighed by sport's benefits

Sean Ingle

A major new study has found that concussions in amateur sport are not linked to greater long-term risks of cognitive decline - and that playing sport may potentially have a "protective" effect on the brain.

The surprise results - published in the Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery and Psychiatry - were based on analysing lifetime concussion histories from more than 15,000 participants aged between 50 and 90, making it the largest study of its kind.

Notably, researchers found that people who reported sports-related concussions actually had a marginally better cognitive performance than those who reported no concussions. One of the paper's authors, Prof Vanessa Raymont from the University of Oxford, said the findings could have policy implications for contact sports.

"This study suggests that there could be long-term benefits from sport which could outweigh any negative effects of concussions, which could have important implications for policy decisions around contact sport participation. It may also be that non-sports-related head injuries lead to greater brain damage than sports-related concussions."

However, the authors stressed that their findings did not apply to concussions in professional sport, which "tend to be more frequent, debilitating and severe".

Of the 15,214 participants in the study, 39.5% reported at least one concussion and 3.2% at least one moderate-severe concussion. Researchers then compared cognitive function among individuals with zero, one, two and three or more sports-related concussions (SRCS) to those with zero, one, two and three or more non-sports-related concussions from falls, car accidents, assaults and other causes. The SRC group showed 4.5 percentile rank better working memory than those who had not experienced an SRC as well as a 7.9% better reasoning capacity than those without concussions.

The results were broadly welcomed by professor John Fairclough of Progressive Rugby. "This retrospective study supports the assertion that compared to the elite game, the community game is relatively safe, and concussion and long-term neurological risk is in the main outweighed by the physical, mental and social benefits enjoyed," he said.

Fairclough warned, however, that there were still "legitimate concerns about children participating in contact sports".

Cycling *Tour of Britain*

Evenepoel and Alaphilippe set up opening win for Magnier


▲ *Paul Magnier crosses the finish line to win the opening stage in Kelso*

William Fotheringham

The spectacle of Remco Evenepoel and Julian Alaphilippe unchained is worth the viewing, and if the opening stage yesterday sets a precedent, this could be quite a week. The Belgian double Olympic champion and the French double world champion combined on the Scottish borders to set up the win for their youthful Soudal-Quickstep teammate Paul Magnier.

The Frenchman Magnier is all of 20, in his first season as a professional, and seemed overwhelmed to have France's and Belgium's finest riding their hearts out for him.

Alaphilippe and Evenepoel rode hard to whittle the peloton down on the final climb out of Melrose, Evenepoel kept the pace intense on the descent towards Kelso, but it was Alaphilippe who did the hard, risky work in the final kilometre, rubbing shoulders unnervingly with Jake Stewart of Israel-Premier Tech to keep Magnier in position.

The Frenchman then put in a searing burst into the final acute right-hander over the river Tweed with 400m to go, before Magnier put in the coup de grace, surging clear of Stewart's teammate Ethan Vernon just before the leaders sped on to the bumpy cobbles leading to the finish line. Vernon had no chance of getting on terms while the other favourite for the sprint, Ethan Hayter, had been ridden wide on the last right-hander and taken out of contention.

"'Loulou' and Remco tried to go on the climb," said Magnier, who won his first professional race in January in Majorca. "But they worked for me for the bunch sprint, they did it perfectly. It was important to have a good position before the last corner because of [going on to] the cobbles; I started my sprint early, and kept going."

Not every team leader would risk their skin for a young teammate as Evenepoel and Alaphilippe did. It spoke volumes for the collective ethos in the team, whose Italian rider Gianni Moscon had controlled the pace for the bulk of the stage.

The stage in Cleveland and North Yorkshire today is the toughest of the race with three stiff climbs around Whitby before the final two climbs of Saltburn Bank, which is the perfect springboard for an attack from one of the favourites. Magnier felt that it might prove too much for him, in which case he will be working to repay his illustrious teammates.

Good lad that Messi: my two weeks as coach of Argentina

World champions asked me for a scouting report – but I was not really sure what it was they were seeking

Jonathan Wilson

I was in the Jardyland bar in Abidjan, Ivory Coast's biggest city, watching Manchester City beat Everton on 10 February when I was appointed interim assistant coach of Argentina. The offer in the WhatsApp was clear: you put together scouting reports on Nigeria and Ivory Coast, who Argentina were supposed to be facing in friendlies in China in March, and we'll call you assistant coach and explain how we go about preparing for games.

It was almost a decade ago that Matías Manna, now a key member of Argentina's backroom staff, having read my book Angels With Dirty Faces, had got in touch to discuss a theory he had about the team in the 1950s. This offer he was making was a gimmick; I'm not deluded enough to think otherwise. But equally, everybody else is deluded if they think I'm not going to be talking for the rest of my life about my stint as the assistant manager of the world champions when they prepared for their second successive Copa América triumph. Lionel Messi? Yeah, he played under me. Good lad, yeah.

As it turned out, China were less convinced that Messi is a good lad after a strained hamstring forced him to miss an Inter Miami tour game in Hong Kong in February. Fearing a similar withdrawal, the Chinese authorities cancelled the games, leaving Argentina to hastily arrange a pair of friendlies in the US, against El Salvador and Costa Rica, neither of whom I have seen play. My term as Argentina's first British coach since the first world war lasted a fortnight.

That was long enough to start making preliminary notes. It was a mildly terrifying experience. There's nothing more likely to make a journalist doubt himself than the knowledge that their work will be read by actual football people. Given Seko Fofana's positioning, would you call Ivory Coast's formation a 4-3-3 or a 4-2-3-1, when it was somewhere in between? I was confident Nigeria under José Peseiro played in a 3-4-3, but surely Argentina needed more than that? Do real football people even care about formations any more?

I started to watch a rerun of March's Africa Cup of Nations final, when Ivory Coast beat Nigeria 2-1. I wrote down how Nigeria kicked off: knock it back to William Troost-Ekong who belted it long for the right-sided centre-back Semi Ajayi, who'd charged forward. That was demonstrably correct but it also seemed a bit simple; they didn't really need me to tell them that. Troost-Ekong, I realised, when in possession and facing away from his own goal, liked to open his body and play the ball to his right to Ajayi. That sounded like the kind of thing that may help setting a pressing trap, but it did mean that most of my jottings seemed to focus on the central defenders. Big. Good in air. Calvin Bassey quick; Ajayi and Troost-Ekong slow. But it didn't take hours of research to realise that.

Was that what they were looking for? What I was confident in seemed obvious, what seemed potentially interesting I doubted. Look for patterns in any set of data and the next thing you know you're sounding like a cross between a character in an Umberto Eco novel and Matt Le Tissier. It was a relief that I never had to submit anything.

Maybe they were being polite, but details like Troost-Ekong favouring passes to Ajayi did seem to be the sort of thing they were looking for. They'd wanted me for the "in-stadium view". I didn't like to admit that in the stadium I'd been concentrating on my match report and that most of my "analysis" had come from watching a recording.

Everything was far more confusing than it had initially appeared; even the term "analyst", it seems, is open for debate. Manna was born in 1983 in San Vicente, a small town to the south of Buenos Aires. He has worked for Argentina at the past four World Cups and was on Jorge Sampaoli's staff at Sevilla.

He was in charge of video analysis for Lionel Scaloni in Qatar at the World Cup but his job is much more wide-reaching than that. "Do they," he said, "call a psychologist a 'script analyst' because he writes in his notebook?"

A former lecturer in sociology,

Having Messi is an enormous advantage but, as Argentina learned, it is not sufficient

Manna enjoys the provocation of saying the role of the analyst does not exist, a conclusion he came to after observing how Pep Guardiola worked with Carles Planchart and Domènec Torrent at Barcelona and Bayern. Both followed him to City, where Planchart remains performance analyst while Torrent left in 2018 and is coach of Atlético San Luis in Mexico.

"The analyst is a coach," Manna said. "Too often the analyst becomes passive or isolated. On the one hand there is software, which can only improve the analysis, but on the other there is his role as an assistant. If he doesn't know what is being done during the week, how the coach thinks, he can only offer a view separate from the development of the team. The role of the 'analyst' has been misinterpreted. He is a coach, an assistant." Which, frankly, sounded

JonathanWilson surrounded by (clockwise from bottom left) William Troost-Ekong, Lionel Messi , Emiliano Martinez Ángel Di María, and Leandro Paredes

significantly beyond me. Manna believes football has a damaging tendency to arrange itself into silos; for him, everything interacts with everything else and that interdependency is essential.

"In recent years," he said, "analysis has become very linear, partial, fragmented. Your opponent is studied on the one hand and your own team on the other. And it's not like that; it's not good."

He cites as an inspiration the French philosopher Edgar Morin, whose work on complex thought has been extremely influential in Latin America. "Analysis has to be integrated," Manna said. "I look more at my team and what it can do in relation to the opponent.

"If the analyst does not integrate his study into the coach's exercises, it's pointless. A fragmentated analysis leads to a worse game; a systemic view from a coach-analyst will seek a more natural, organic game."

As an example, Manna remembers watching the World Cup semi-final between France and Morocco with Scaloni and his children in the manager's office in Qatar. It wasn't clear whether Ángel Di María, struggling with a muscular problem in a foot, was going to be fit to play in the final. Argentina had been training with the back three they used in the quarter-final against the Netherlands. But as they watched Jules Koundé, France's right-back, struggle against the direct running of Sofiane Boufal, Scaloni realised that if Di María played it had to be on the left, against Koundé.

That may sound obvious, but it meant rejigging a system that had dominated against Croatia in the semi-final and leaving out Leandro Paredes, who has been consistently excellent for Scaloni's Argentina. "It was," Manna said, "the most important decision in the history of Argentinian football."

Di María was brilliant in the final, brought down for a penalty for the first before scoring the second, as Argentina raced into a 2-0 lead. Di María's positioning was just one aspect of a much broader rethinking of Argentina's approach. After claiming the 1993 Copa América, Argentina went 28 years without winning a trophy, a drought all the more painful because of the extraordinary quality of attacking player available in that period: Sergio Agüero, Carlos Tévez, Juan Román Riquelme, Gonzalo Higuaín, Javier Pastore, Ezequiel Lavezzi … What was it then, that changed at the Copa América in 2021 and then at the World Cup in Qatar a year later? What has brought about the glorious finale to Messi's career?

For Manna, the issue is one of balance and, although he doesn't say it, the sense is that Argentina have almost benefited from the retirement of many of their great forwards; there is less temptation now to try to squeeze in an additional forward.

He contrasts the games Argentina played against Croatia at the 2018 and 2022 World Cups. The 3-0 reverse Argentina endured in the group stage in Nizhny Novgorod represents a recent nadir, a shapeless performance that brought their heaviest defeat at a World Cup since the 4-0 defeat against Germany in 2010 and had people talking about the 6-1 humbling against Czechoslovakia in Helsingborg in 1958 that ushered in the era of anti-fútbol. The 3-0 win in the semi-final in Lusail, meanwhile, was probably Argentina's best performance in 2022, certainly their most comfortable victory.

"If you look at the match in 2018 there were only two midfielders, then one," Manna said. Argentina played a 3-4-2-1 with Javier Mascherano and Enzo Pérez holding behind Messi, Maxi Meza and Agüero, but Pérez went off for Paulo Dybala midway through the second half with the score at 1-0 as Argentina chased the game.

In 2022, the shape was more of a 4-4-2 with Messi behind Julián Álvarez playing on a platform of Rodrigo De Paul, Paredes, Enzo Fernández and Alexis Mac Allister. "For me that was key," Manna said. "Have an extra man in the midfield. Argentina respected its sources, its history, the short pass and the ball and did not get carried away by a direct, physical game. Europeans are not going to say it, but Argentina played a Latin American-style game."

Paredes is not as celebrated as certain others, but the Roma midfielder has been used more by Scaloni than any other player. "Like all great central midfielders," Manna said, "he wins the ball a lot from the front and knows how to defend behind him.

"If a team is built around passing, it's important to have a holder like Paredes who interacts well with the inside players and the No 10. He's the Argentinian who best finds Messi between the lines. You can't analyse the game individually. The game is in the relationships between players."

Counterintuitively, Manna believes, it is a player such as Paredes who takes Argentina back to "la nuestra", the celebrated close-passing, technical style that characterised Argentinian football before the disgrace of Helsingborg. "When Paredes, Messi, De Paul and [Giovani] Lo Celso complement each other, they represent the true style of Argentinian football," he said.

"Platini needed Giresse-Fernández-Tigana; Zico needed Andrade-Tita-Adílio; Cruyff needed Neeskens, Haan, Mühren. Messi needs his support. Good controlling midfielders can enhance even the very best players and, obviously, Messi improved them all."

Having Messi is an enormous advantage, but as Argentina learned in the years before Scaloni, it is not sufficient. While the 2022 World Cup was all about Messi and the culmination of his career, the role of Scaloni and his analysts – or assistant coaches – in setting up the team for each individual opponent to get the best out of him should not be overlooked.

Nor will I let people forget that, for two weeks this year, that team included me.

Nations League

Palmer, Watkins and Foden pull out of Carsley's England squad

Cole Palmer, Ollie Watkins and Phil Foden have been ruled out of Lee Carsley's first matches as interim England manager.

The Euro 2024 runners-up head to the Republic of Ireland on Saturday before welcoming Finland to Wembley three days later as they begin life without Gareth Southgate.

Carsley has been appointed on a temporary basis and named a 26-man squad for the Nations League double-header this month, but three players have had to pull out.

In a statement, the Football Association said: "Cole Palmer, Ollie Watkins and Phil Foden will play no part in England's forthcoming Uefa Nations League fixtures. The Three Lions squad reported to St George's Park on Tuesday but, following assessment, both Palmer and Watkins returned to their clubs to continue rehabilitation for ongoing issues. Foden did not report through illness and is ruled out of the matches against Republic of Ireland and Finland. No further additions are planned at this moment in time."

England's trip to the Aviva Stadium comes 55 days after Southgate endured a narrow defeat in a second successive European Championship final. The manager called time on his eight-year reign shortly after the 2-1 defeat against Spain in Berlin, with Carsley, the England Under-21s coach, parachuted into the role as the FA seeks a permanent replacement.

The 50-year-old, who represented the Republic of Ireland as a player, has been lined up take charge of all six Nations League matches this autumn. **PA Media**

Women's Champions League

True believers

Barcelona and Lyon changes ignite hope in challengers

Last season's semi-finalists all have new managers but hopefuls such as Arsenal and City still face an uphill task

Suzanne Wrack

The time is ripe to challenge the established order. Change is afoot among the top teams in the Women's Champions League, which gets under way tonight with the first round of qualifying. For any club with ambitions of toppling the stalwarts Lyon and Barcelona, who have won 11 titles (eight and three respectively), this could be the season to do it.

The task is still huge, the mountain maintains its nausea-inducing height but, with different guides leading those teams, their routes to the top may not be quite as straightforward.

Lyon and Barcelona have had managerial changes this summer, with Joe Montemurro taking over from Sonia Bompastor in France and Jonatan Giráldez leaving the Catalan capital after being recruited by Michele Kang for Washington Spirit and being replaced by his assistant Pere Romeu. Last season's other semi-finalists have also changed managers, with Bompastor replacing Emma Hayes at Chelsea and Fabrice Abriel taking over at Paris Saint-Germain after the departure of Jocelyn Prêcheur to the Kang-owned London City Lionesses.

Does this mean the trophy is up for grabs? Can top teams keep winning while undergoing managerial change? Do clubs with great stability at the top have a better chance of European glory?

Maybe. Maybe. Maybe. "I hope so," Montemurro said when asked by the Guardian this summer whether Giráldez's exit opened up the competition for other sides. "The Champions League is synonymous with Lyon. It's synonymous with who they are and what they stand for: the powerhouse of Europe.

"It's just belief. It really is. I think it's always an internal mentality, an internal belief that drives that ability to want to do more. Week in, week out, with every game, whether we're playing a local team, whether we're playing a top team, that has to be a non-negotiable because the best teams just do it automatically every week."

Managerial stability may be the slimmest of advantages, and outweighed by many other factors, but any glint of weakness in any of the European giants will be pounced on. Hope, after all, is a powerful thing.

For Arsenal, the road to the final is very long. They play Rangers tonight at Boreham Wood in a semi-final of qualifying round one, hoping to earn a place in the final on Saturday against Atlético Madrid or Rosenborg and then progress to the two-leg second qualifying round, from which the winners qualify for the group stage. Given Arsenal fell at the first hurdle last year, beating Linköping before losing against Paris FC on penalties to go out in qualifying round one, it is perhaps premature for England's only European champions (2007) to think too far ahead.

The same can be said for Manchester City, who did not qualify for last season's tournament and failed to get past qualifying round one in 2022-23 or round two in 2021-22. They enter in qualifying round two this season.



▲ *Sonia Bompastor has left Lyon to take the head coach job at Chelsea*

And yet, given how little is required to have a big impact in women's football in these early developmental stages, nothing is inconceivable. The Arsenal manager, Jonas Eidevall, said he believed his team could go "all the way" in the Champions League. "My focus is on this mini tournament here," he said. "We as a team have potential to go all the way in Europe – that's how much I believe in our capabilities. We have a tough opponent with Rangers and that will take all our focus."

The defender Leah Williamson said: "We've obviously underperformed. There's been a number of teams at the top that try to take trophies off each other. I feel we're getting closer. I enjoy the way we play. It does need to go up, but I don't think we're too far away. I think last year was a hurtful situation. We were left to regret that for the rest of the year."

City's 1-0 defeat against PSG in a pre-season friendly in Perth showed where they are at when competing with top European sides. "We know we have to do the difficult part, putting the ball in the back of the net, but I thought our play was outstanding," their manager, Gareth Taylor, said.

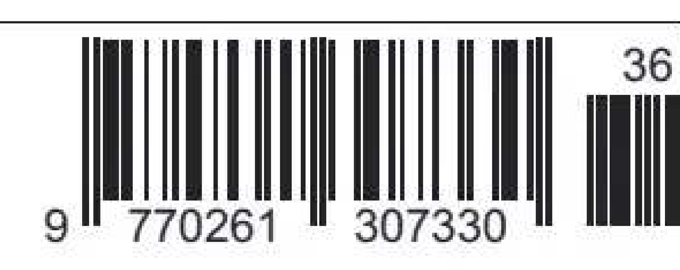
"From the goalkeeper all the way up to the final third we were top class. They're a very good team but we completely dominated. Some of the football we played was top and we can take heart from that."

Hayes left Chelsea's squad in a strong position after 12 years but Bompastor must imprint her football without it affecting results. Fortunately for Chelsea, who go straight into the group stage, in Bompastor they have a manager who has won the Champions League as a player and manager.

"I think we have all the infrastructure to win it," she said. "We have to work really hard to make sure we get there. I can't wait to start this competition as it's a really special one. We are looking to build a squad able to perform at every stage of the season because we have so many games. It's a new era with new faces in the squad."

The hope is there, the ambition is there, now the performances have to be there.

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TOM JENKINS/THE GUARDIAN

Leicester win appeal in blow to top flight over PSR case

Ben Fisher

Leicester City are poised to avoid a points deduction this season after winning their protracted legal dispute with the Premier League pertaining to an alleged breach of profitability and sustainability rules (PSR).

After Leicester's appeal, an independent panel found there was no jurisdiction for the case to be heard. While the panel conceded PSR "are, in relevant parts, far from well drafted", the decision is a major boost for Leicester and a blow for the league, which said it was "surprised and disappointed" at the result.

Rival clubs had expected Leicester to be charged, perhaps early next year owing to the complex nature of the case and the back-and-forth between appeals. Everton and Nottingham Forest were both given points deductions last season.

The independent commission - comprising three senior lawyers including two former court of appeal judges - effectively ruled the league was overreaching by charging Leicester, who were in the Championship at the time the charge was issued in March. The charge related to the three-year period ending 2022-23. The panel found Leicester's accounts ended after the club were relegated.

The league has confirmed it will consider whether to make a subsequent appeal, though that is thought to be unlikely. Under PSR clubs are permitted to lose a maximum of £105m across a three-season period.

The league appeared to acknowledge flaws in its rules, saying: "If the appeal board is correct, its decision will have created a situation where any club exceeding the PSR threshold could avoid accountability in these specific circumstances. This is clearly not the intention of the rules.

"It is of critical importance that the Premier League is able to enforce its rules consistently to maintain the principle of fairness. The league will now consider what further action it can take to ensure this is the case."

Leicester are confident of avoiding a PSR charge for the three-year period ending June 2024 owing to the £40m in fees they generated from the departures of Kiernan Dewsbury-Hall and Enzo Maresca, both to Chelsea.

In a statement yesterday Leicester said they "welcomed" the appeal board's decision and insisted the verdict will benefit all clubs.

White-ball Bazball
England give McCullum full control in all three formats

Simon Burnton

Brendon McCullum will take full control of England's men's international teams from January. The red-ball coach assumes white-ball duties in what the ECB called "a strategic restructure of the set-up".

McCullum has also extended his contract, which had been due to end after next winter's Ashes series, to the end of 2027 and the aftermath of that autumn's 50-over World Cup in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia.



Brendon McCullum will take over England's ODI and T20 sides in January

The New Zealander took charge of England's Test team in May 2022, and with Ben Stokes as captain transformed their approach and their fortunes: they had won one of their previous 17 games but they have since won 19 out of 28, losing three of 18 at home. In the same period England's white-ball fortunes have waned, leading to the dismissal of Matthew Mott as coach in late July.

Rob Key decided to separate the Test and limited-overs roles after his appointment as England's managing director of men's cricket in April 2022, after eight years when the teams had been led by a single head coach. Key said an easing of England's congested schedule was behind his decision to amalgamate them once again.

"Being able to align all teams now is particularly exciting and we look forward to taking on all challenges that come our way," he said. "For the last two years, constant clashes between formats have made it challenging for the white-ball environment; fortunately, these are easing.

"The timing of the schedule will allow [McCullum] to dedicate the necessary focus to both roles and we're confident this restructure will bring out the best in our players and coaching staff."

Marcus Trescothick, who was named interim coach of the white-ball team after Mott's departure, will lead the side for the ODI and T20 series at home to Australia this month and in the West Indies in November. McCullum will take over for January's tour of India and the Champions


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